

Bonding, Bridging, and Linking Social Capital and Psychological Empowerment among Squatter Settlements in Tehran, Iran.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the effect of bonding, bridging and linking social capital in the psychological empowerment among squatter settlements in Tehran, Iran. The sample comprised 328 poor people in two communities from Iran, which were randomly selected for the study. A self-administered questionnaire was used as the data collection method and the stratified random sampling technique was employed. The results revealed the significant effect of bonding, bridging and linking social capital on psychological empowerment among squatter settlements. Bonding social capital had the largest beta coefficient than other dimensions, such as bridging and linking social capital in predicting psychological empowerment among squatter settlements.

KEYWORDS: Bonding Social Capital, Bridging Social Capital, Linking Social Capital, Psychological Empowerment, Squatter Settlements, Tehran, Iran.

INTRODUCTION

Urbanization and urban growth have increased in many developing countries such as Iran in the past few decades. While natural population growth has been the major contributor to urbanization, rural-urban migration continues to be an important factor [1]. Although in many third world cities natural population growth is the main contributor to urbanization, rural-urban migration is still an essential factor [2]. It is widely documented that the rural migrants are settled in squatters and slum areas, which makes the growth of urban squatter settlements a major problem in developing countries [3]. In fact, the squatter areas are growing even faster than the booming cities they surround. According to UN-Habitat [4], almost 1 billion people, or 32% of the world's urban population, live in slums, of which the majority are in developing countries. With the increase in the population settled in squatter areas, the locus of poverty is moving to the cities, a process now recognized as the 'urbanization of poverty'. According to the World Bank [5], slums and squatter settlements are the resulting effects of inadequate or failed policies, planning, bad governance, inappropriate regulation, dysfunctional land markets, housing crises and a fundamental lack of political will [3]. To lessen the problem the squatter members may be equipped with essential skills and capacities to enhance their situation.

Social capital has received considerable attention from scholars including Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, Robert Putnam, and Francis Fukuyama, who believe in the important role of social capital in achieving development. Social capital is widely considered as a potential for the poor in developing societies in urban as well as rural communities [6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14]. Putnam [15] indicated that social capital has particular importance for the poor since they are less able to draw upon other forms of capital (e.g., human and financial capital). Squatter settlements are known as communities apart from the level of sufficient internal cohesion, low-income settlement, and, most importantly, disconnected from wider society [16], implying a lack of bridging and linking social capital. Woolcock and Narayan [17] contends that the poor (urban and rural) generally have abundant bonding social capital, some bridging social capital, and little or no linking social capital.

Empowerment studies have widely documented the role of social capital for poor people. Empowerment and social capital have entered the discourse on development in an important way [18], in which empowerment has become an important tool for enabling marginalized individuals to gain access to resources and expand their own experiences [19,20, 21]. Grootaert [22] indicated that building social capital is one way to facilitate empowerment; however, viewing empowerment and social capital as multilevel concepts facilitates the link with poverty reduction strategies. According to Alsop [23] psychological empowerment and assets are important as they support other assets of empowerment. Psychological empowerment is often the product of social and/or political power, but it cannot be reduced to either. In fact, a lack of psychological empowerment will render all other forms of

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empowerment ineffective. Psychological empowerment is, therefore, a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for economic empowerment [24,25].

Understanding the effect of social capital on psychological empowerment among squatter settlements is essential for policy makers and urban managers in their effort to empower the squatter settlements. However, as squatter settlements have limited access to resources and Iran is faced with a rapid growth of squatters around its metropolitan areas, it is necessary to understand the different aspects of empowerment and social capital as the main sources of networking among squatter settlements.

Empowerment

The World Bank defines empowerment as the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives [26]. Kabeer[27], however, defines empowerment as the process through which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such ability. She focuses on three dimensions that define the capacity to exercise strategic life choices: access to resources, agency and achievement. Empowerment is on nearly every community developer's mind. Empowerment is relevant at the individual and collective level, and can be economic, social, or political. The term can be used to characterize relations within households or between poor people and other actors at the global level.

Psychological Empowerment

Although psychological empowerment is often the product of social and/or political power, it cannot be reduced to either. In fact, the lack of psychological empowerment will render all other forms of empowerment ineffective. Psychological empowerment is, therefore, a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for economic empowerment. Zimmerman, Israel, Schulz and Checkoway[28] posited that empowerment is a multidimensional construct that may be applied to communities, organizations and individuals. Empowerment at the individual level can be called psychological empowerment, which includes three dimensions. The desire for the control dimension refers to the perceived intrapersonal capacity to lead and influence social and political systems [29]. Self-perception includes the motivation to exert control. Self-efficacy reflects the interactional dimension, belief or perception of the knowledge and interpersonal skills needed to master social and political systems. It includes knowledge about the availability of resources needed to achieve goals [30] and the development of the decision-making and problem-solving skills necessary to actively engage with one's environment. The behavioural or perceived competence dimension links to action and influences social and political systems. It reflects role mastery, which, besides requiring the skilful accomplishment of one or more assigned tasks, also requires successful coping with non-routine, role-related situations. It includes participation in activities and community organizations, such as political groups, neighbourhood associations and church or religious groups, helping others to cope with problems in life and with contacting public officials. One way to develop a sense of psychological empowerment is to become involved in decisions that affect community life, such as contributing ideas and opinions in a public sphere on social matters that are important to social policies (such as actively expressing opinions that raise public awareness and concerns). This means that through citizen participation, empowerment may emerge. At the same time, a lack of meaningful participation in social and public affairs can be disempowering. Disempowerment occurs when citizens and/or communities lose significant control over their affairs.

Bonding, bridging and linking social capital

Regardless of whether social capital is believed to be an individual or group level property or asset, most definitions include two components: one cognitive and the other structural. The concepts of bonding, bridging and linking social capital have proven useful in characterizing the multiple dimensions of social identities and relations at the community level [31,32]. The bonding and bridging terms, first introduced by Gittell and Vidal [31], are similar in meaning to Granovetter's [33] strong and weak ties, and can also be understood as a fuller specification of Woolcock's [12] concept of integration. Linking social capital likely derives from the term "linkage" in Woolcock's [12] framework. Discussions on bonding, bridging and linking social capital emphasize that each form is useful for meeting different needs and has particular advantages and disadvantages [34,35]. Multiple roles of bonding social capital are recognized in the literature: creation of shared identities and personal reputation; development of local reciprocity and particularized trust; and provision of emotional closeness, social support and crisis aid [36,37]. Such ties engender a high level of solidarity within the group structure, which can effectively mobilize individuals and resources around a common purpose [37,38]. Bonding social capital (e.g., family structures) is also considered a foundation from which to establish bridging and linking ties to other groups [35]. Notwithstanding, the numerous positive functions of bonding, most discussions also draw attention to its potential negative aspects. The various

downsides of social capital noted by Portes and Landolt [39], and Portes [40] (i.e., harm to individuals within the group, exclusion of outsiders, and other negative externalities) are generally associated with bonding social capital [41, 42]. The most perverse (anti-social) outcomes of social capital are attributed to bonding taken to extremes, especially in the absence of bridging relations [41, 15]. Bonding social capital refers to strong, dense ties between people who know each other well, such as family members, close friends, neighbours, and members of primary groups [31, 32, 17, 5]. Bonding connects individuals who are similar in terms of socio-economic position and demographic characteristics; thus, groups defined by these relations have a high degree of homogeneity [41, 43, 15]. Putnam's interest in civic society shows a clear preference for bridging social capital. Putnam enthuses about the importance of moving beyond our social and political and professional identities to connect with people unlike ourselves [15]. Bridging social capital is the term used to refer to more heterogeneous horizontal social networks that give people access to valuable resources and information outside their immediate network of friends and relations. The "bridging bias" is reflected in other political theories, including the optimistic sentiments behind generalized trust [44], and outcomes, such as the benefits of trust upon civilization [45], democratic participation [46] and confidence in political institutions [47], as well as the problems of trust concerning government accountability [48]. The third form of social capital is known as linking social capital [49] and is formed by the vertical connections that connect individuals and groups with institutions. Through linking social capital, groups are capable of interacting with different types of institutions to modify their policies or download resources [50]. Linking social capital refers to relations between individuals and groups in different social strata in a hierarchy where power, social status and wealth are accessed by different groups [51]. Woolcock [35] extends this to include the capacity to leverage resources, ideas and information from formal institutions beyond the community. The term linking social capital describes ties connecting individuals, or the groups they belong to, to people or groups in position of political or financial power. This kind of network is critical for leveraging resources, ideas and information beyond normal community linkages, and, therefore, may play a significant role for social well-being.

METHODOLOGY

Measurement and Instrumentation

Psychological Empowerment: Psychological assets are defined as an individual's ability to make decisions and have control over his or her personal life, which, in the present study, the self-perceived empowerment, personal view to the social status, and capacity to envisage changes, were considered to measure psychological empowerment. To measure psychological assets an instrument including nine items was adopted from Alsop et al.'s [23] "empowerment Questionnaire of the World Bank". To measure the self-perceived empowerment, three items were considered to measure the personal view of social status, two items to measure the capacity to envisage change to aspire, and four items to assess the capacity of respondent's desires to change. Respondents were required to rate their response on a scale from 0 (nothing) to 5 (too much).

Bonding, Bridging and Linking Social Capital: Bonding social capital denotes ties between people in similar situations, such as immediate family and close friends [12]. Bonding social capital in this study is defined as an individual's perception and behaviour of the trust and relationship with family and close friends. To measure bonding social capital an instrument including 6-items was adopted from Grootaert, Narayan, Jones and Woolcock [52] "Measuring Social Capital; An Integrated Questionnaire of the World Bank" and using a six-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 5 (strongly agree). Bridging social capital refers to more distant ties of similar persons, such as loose friendships and workmates [12]. In this study, bridging social capital is an individual's perception and behaviour of the trust, and relationship with colleagues and neighbourhood people and society people. To measure bridging social capital an instrument was adopted from Grootaert, Narayan, Jones and Woolcock [52] "Measuring Social Capital; An Integrated Questionnaire of the World Bank". Bridging social capital impacts were measured by the 11-items and using a six-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 5 (strongly agree).

Linking social capital refers to reaching out to unlike people in dissimilar situations, such as those who are entirely outside of the community, thus, enabling members to leverage a far wider range of resources than are available in the community [12]. Linking social capital in this study is an individual's perception and behaviour of the trust, and relationship with the ethnic group and governmental organization and non-governmental organization. To measure bridging social capital an instrument was adopted from Grootaert, Narayan, Jones and Woolcock [52] "Measuring Social Capital; An Integrated Questionnaire of the World Bank". Linking social capital impacts were measured by the 12-items using a six-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 5 (strongly agree).

Sample and Data Collection: The research instrument verified adequate levels of internal consistency, reliability, and content validity according to past research. The cluster sampling method was used to select the community and the random sampling technique was used to select individual respondents who were between 25 and 75 years. This study used the survey technique and questionnaires to collect the data from 328 selected respondents in two squatter settlement communities in Tehran including Islamabad and Bagh-e-Azari. To achieve the research objective the standard multiple regression with enter method was employed to determine the influence of predictors on the dependent variable.

RESULTS

The main aim of the present paper was to determine the association of the bonding, bridging, and linking social capital and psychological empowerment. In order to achieve this, the Pearson *r* correlation coefficient between the variables is employed. Pearson correlation addressed the significant relationship between bonding social capital ($r = .382, N=328, p \leq 0.01$), bridging social capital ($r = .458, N=328, p \leq 0.01$), and linking social capital and ($r = .369, N=328, p \leq 0.01$) with psychological empowerment. Correlation analysis showed that the bridging social capital has a stronger linear relationship than bonding and linking social capital. Therefore, the findings showed that there was a significant relationship between social capital dimensions and psychological assets among squatter settlement people.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation between Social capital dimensions and Psychological Empowerment

	Empowerment	Bonding Social Capital	Bridging Social Capital	Linking Social Capital
Empowerment	1			
Bonding Social Capital	.421***	1		
Bridging Social Capital	.397***	.477***	1	
Linking Social Capital	.284***	.205***	.540***	1

*** $p < 0.01$ level (2-tailed)

It can be concluded that the Pearson Correlation has proven that there was a significant relationship between social capital dimensions (bonding, bridging, and linking social capital) and psychological assets. A positive correlation means that squatter settlement with social capital dimensions (bonding, bridging, and linking social capital) increases psychological assets. Furthermore, the results in Table 2 indicated that social capital dimensions significantly contribute to predict psychological empowerment ($R^2 = .282, F(3, 324) = 42.335, P = .000$). The R^2 value of 0.282 implies that the three aforementioned predictors explain around 28% of variance in the psychological empowerment.

Table 2: Standard Regression Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
				R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
.442a	.195	.188	10.53402	.195	26.160	3	324	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Linking Social Capital, Bonding Social Capital, Bridging Social Capital
 b. Dependent Variable: Psychological Empowerment

The ANOVA results indicated that based on the F value, [$F(3, 324) = 42.335, P < .001$], a significant relationship exists between the weighted linear composite of the independent variables as specified by the model and the dependent variable. The results presented in Table 3 indicate that the bonding social capital may have the highest effect on predicting psychological empowerment among squatter settlements (Beta = .394; $p = .000$). However, bridging social capital (Beta = .321; $p = .000$) and linking social capital (Beta = .234; $p = .000$) significantly contributed to predict psychological empowerment among squatter settlements.

Table 3: Estimates of the Coefficients for the model

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	24.382	2.029		12.015	.000
Bonding Social Capital	.975	.126	.394	7.738	.000
Bridging Social Capital	.423	.069	.321	6.120	.000
Linking Social Capital	.294	.068	.234	4.345	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Psychological Empowerment

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings indicated that bonding, bridging and linking social capital have a positive relationship with psychological empowerment. The overall results indicated that the bonding social capital has a strong and positive effect on psychological empowerment. Nevertheless, bridging and linking social capital has the second order of rank in predicting psychological empowerment. However, the key informants consider each of the three types of social capital important, and emphasize the significance of access to economic, psychological and political resources [53]. These findings are consistent with the results of Woolcock and Narayan [14], World Bank [49], Harknett[54], Portes[55], and Cramb[56]. According to Woolcock and Narayan [17], and the World Bank [49], social capital allows poor people to increase their access to resources and economic opportunities, obtain basic services, and participate in local governance. As Harknett[56] emphasized, social capital and networks play an important role in providing financial and in-kind support to poor families. In addition, it is documented that people can gain economic capital and cultural capital through social capital [55].

According to Cramb[56], bonding social capital (represented by dense, homogeneous networks) encompasses solidarity and community identity. It can contribute to developing a sense of efficacy, psychological empowerment, and a need to express identity. Bridging social capital (represented by heterogeneous networks) can play a part in developing organizational resources and capitalizing on opportunity structures in the host country. There are significant social and economic costs tied to transactions between people who are deeply connected relationally. In considering the demands placed on people to continue patronizing a business of a close friend or relative, even if the services are more expensive or of poorer quality, to counter these costs, and to expand one's economic options, Granovetter[57] suggested that people have to nurture a set of autonomous relationships that can be used to balance the pressures inherent in close, or embedded, relationships. This line of reasoning was influential within the literature in developing the notion of bonding social capital and bridging social capital as it helps describe the embedded and autonomous relationships that are available to people. Those interested in economic development have been encouraged to help poor people create a balance of internal and external relationships so that households can find a variety of means to build economic wealth.

A more recently developed category, linking social capital, has been offered as a sub-category of bridging social capital [35]. Linking social capital is used to describe the leveraging of ideas, resources, and information in a vertical relationship to formal entities of power and influence for the benefit of a community or household [58]. Social capital may operate in different ways, reflecting heterogeneous community groups. Thus, any analysis of social capital needs to pay attention to marginalized groups and how everyday lives are lived in diverse community contexts. Concerning possessing a high level of bonding and bridging among squatter settlements, it is recommended that community workers bend their efforts to identify closed social capital networks within targeted communities and work with these networks to clarify available resources. Identifying people and organizations in local neighbourhoods that already serve as bridging agents, or have the potential to build bridges among closed networks, and engaging these individuals and institutions in expanding closed social capital and beginning strategies to build bridging social capital within these communities and between the community and citywide resources is strongly recommended to community workers and NGO's. In addition, employment of modelling, mentoring, and communities of practice, technical assistance, might receive more attention by community development practitioners as practical methods that simultaneously build bridging social and cultural capital to build capacity in local organizations.

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