

**EVALUATING SOCIAL CAPITAL IN RURAL AND URBAN COMMUNITIES
FROM SOCIAL WORK PERSPECTIVE: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM RURAL
AND URBAN COMMUNITIES**

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Abstract

This study has been conducted to assess the status of the social capital in rural and urban communities from social work perspective. The empirical evidence was derived from one SHG group each from rural community and one urban community. With increased rural-urban migration due to the advent of urbanization, increased expansion of urban area and Globalization, there is an immediate need to compare and analyze the social capital of both rural and urban communities. The core questions from the integrated questionnaire to measure social capital, published by World Bank, have been used in this study.

Introduction

Social capital is a relatively new concept to Indian Social Work. Social capital is a concept that has received less attention within social work than other professions (Hawkins and Maurer, 2011). Even though the social capital concept is strongly based in sociology and the sociological concepts about society, its efficacy is closely related to the social work practice. The term social capital sounds broader in the framework of capital and really debatable to know that how it is such an important deriving source of power and influence in a community. The social network and the family are the important aspects of social capital. Portes (1998, p. 7) observes that, "Whereas economic capital is in people's bank accounts and human capital is inside their heads, social capital inheres in the structure of their relationships".

Social Capital

Social capital refers to the "...stocks of social trust, norms and networks that people can draw upon in order to solve common problems" (Sirianni and Friedland 1997). These networks involve activities of "civic engagement" such as volunteerism and participation in neighborhood

associations, service clubs and charitable groups. A rapidly expanding literature exists on social capital and its importance to rural and urban areas. In both rural and urban areas, social capital refers to the institutions and mechanisms whereby residents relate to and interact with each other to solve problems for the common good (Ostrom 1994). Social capital is defined as an accumulation of the knowledge and identity resources drawn on by communities-of-common-purpose. If social capital originates in micro interactions which are in turn embedded in a meso and macro social order, then these processes and connections should be observable.

Importance of the Study from Social work perspective

This paper is an attempt to study the variations of social capital in an urban community and ins rural community. Generally people who live where they grew up can be expected to have the strongest bonding and high social capital. Those who have moved on from their place of birth or where they socialized are likely to have less social capital. Rural communities are widely believed to have high levels of social capital, which can sometimes work to prevent undesired changes from occurring. With high social capital, there will be trust, co-operation and harmony among people in society.

Social work aims to provide solutions to the various social issues and social problems by challenging and correcting the root issues/problems itself. It is therefore assessing social capital is the need of the hour to understand our society.

Methodology

The purpose of the paper is to understand whether rural community has the higher social capital level or the urban community. The primary data was collected with the help of interview schedule containing 27 items, from 30 members each from Sri Shivarathreeswara Stree Shakthi Sangha, Suttur village, Mysuru Taluk and District and Sri Mahadeshwara Stree Shakthi Sangha, Kalyangiri, Mysuru.

The secondary data is collected from journals, existing literature and data on websites. The first type of analysis will be primarily tabular in nature, and, given the content and centered on three basic sets of indicators of social capital:

1. Membership in associations and networks (structural social capital),
2. Trust and adherence to norms (cognitive social capital), and

3. Collective action (an output measure).

Tabular analysis is a simple and convenient way to organize data and to extract the basic messages that the data contain. The second part of the analysis will therefore need to include econometric analysis, in particular the estimation of multivariate models of household welfare. Such models aim to identify the contribution of social capital to monetary and nonmonetary aspects of household welfare (consumption of goods, health, and education) in relation to other household assets such as land, human and physical capital.

Key findings

Table 1: A Brief Profile of the Self Help Group members*

Sr. No.	Particulars	Rural (Urban)
1	Average age of the members (Yrs)	30.02 (28.54)
2	Percent married	88 (57)
3	Percent illiterate	36 (10)
4	Percent educated up to 7 th standard	42 (21)
5	Percent belonging to lower social class	56 (64)
6	Average number of family members	4.58 (1.89)
7	Average number of earners in the family	1.61 (0.81)
8	Average family income (Rs) monthly	5639 (7635)
9	Average number of years of association	9.68 (2.96)

*All figures are calculated through simple percentage and simple average.

The profile of the group members of both rural and urban aptly exhibit characteristics the respective communities are generally known for.

Table 2: Analysis of the items in the questionnaire.

Item number	Items in the questionnaire	Rural Community	Urban Community
1	Number of groups, organizations, networks and associations the individual is active in.	6.7	.2

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2	Members of the group belong to same A. Religion B. Gender C. Ethnic or linguistic background/race/caste/tribe	A. Yes (78%) No (22%) B. Yes (46%) No (54%) C. Yes (68%) No (32%)	A. Yes (54%) No (46%) B. Yes (63%) No (37%) C. Yes (24%) No (76%)
3	Members have the same A. Occupation B. Educational Background/level	A. Yes (88%) No (12%) B. Yes (74%) No (26%)	A. Yes (34%) No (66%) B. Yes (67%) No (33%)
4	Interaction with the outside group 1. No 2. Yes, occasionally 3. Yes, frequently	1. 0 2. 18% 3. 82%	1. 0 2. 24% 3. 76%
5	Number of close friends	4.8	3.6
6	People to borrow money equaling to a week's wages or expenses (both rural and urban) 1. Definitely 2. Probably 3. Unsure 4. Probably not 5. Definitely not	1. 20% 2. 12% 3. 34% 4. 26% 5. 8%	1. 12% 2. 21% 3. 33% 4. 29% 5. 5%
7	Generally, Can people be trusted or not 1. People can be trusted 2. You can't be too careful	1. 77% 2. 23%	1. 57% 2. 43%
	Agree/disagree with the statements		

8	<p>A. People willing to help when in need B. Being alert or not about people taking advantage</p> <p>Responses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree strongly 2. Agree somewhat 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Disagree somewhat 5. Disagree strongly 	<p>A(B)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 56% (9%) 2. 20% (13%) 3. 14% (24%) 4. 6% (18%) 5. 4% (36%) 	<p>A(B)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 34% (63%) 2. 18% (20%) 3. 26% (12%) 4. 6% (2%) 5. 16% (3%)
9	<p>Trusting Government officials</p> <p>A. Local Government officials B. Central Government officials</p> <p>Responses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To a very great extent 2. To a great extent 3. Neither great nor small 4. To a small extent 5. To a very small extent 	<p>A(B)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5% (7%) 2. 17% (14%) 3. 37% (32%) 4. 24% (32%) 5. 17% (15%) 	<p>A(B)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 6% (3%) 2. 22% (19%) 3. 30% (44%) 4. 38% (25%) 5. 4% (9%)
10.	<p>Contribution of money/time for the project which does not directly benefit the individual</p> <p>A. Time</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Will not contribute time 2. Will contribute time <p>B. Money</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Will not contribute money 2. Will contribute money 	<p>76%</p> <p>24%</p> <p>88%</p>	<p>82%</p> <p>18%</p> <p>91%</p>

		12%	9%
11.	Participation in communal activities for the benefit of community	Yes (38%) No (62%)	Yes (42%) No (58%)
12.	How many times in the past 12 months	2.8	1.6
13.	People cooperation in solving water problem in the community		
	1. Very likely	38%	21%
	2. Somewhat likely	26%	16%
	3. Neither likely nor unlikely	18%	28%
	4. Somewhat unlikely	11%	14%
	5. Very unlikely	7%	31%
14.	Number of times received or made a phone call	40.71	62.35
15.	Sources of information about government actions		
	1. Relatives, friends and neighbours	4%	3%
	2. Community bulletin board	0%	0%
	3. Local market	2%	3%
	4. Community or local newspaper	8%	4%
	5. National newspaper	28%	38%
	6. Radio	16%	6%
	7. Television	34%	36%
	8. Groups or associations	2%	1%

	9. Business or work associates	0%	0%
	10. Political associates	0%	0%
	11. Community leaders	2%	1%
	12. An agent of the government	1%	1%
	13. NGOs	1%	6%
	14. Internet		
16	<p>Various differences among the members of the community</p> <p>Responses:</p> <p>1. To a very great extent</p> <p>2. To a great extent</p> <p>3. Neither great nor small</p> <p>4. To a small extent</p> <p>5. To a very small extent</p>	<p>1. 18%</p> <p>2. 36%</p> <p>3. 15%</p> <p>4. 27%</p> <p>5. 14%</p>	<p>1. 40%</p> <p>2. 27%</p> <p>3. 16%</p> <p>4. 11%</p> <p>5. 6%</p>
17.	Those differences (in item 17) cause problems	<p>Yes (52%)</p> <p>No (48%)</p>	<p>Yes (71%)</p> <p>No (29%)</p>
	<p>Two differences most often cause problems</p> <p>Differences</p> <p>1. Differences in education</p> <p>2. Differences in landholding</p> <p>3. Differences in wealth/material possessions</p> <p>4. Differences in social status</p> <p>5. Differences between men and women</p> <p>6. Differences between younger and older generations</p> <p>7. Differences between long-term and recent</p>	<p>3%</p> <p>16%</p> <p>28%</p> <p>14%</p> <p>20%</p> <p>2%</p> <p>1%</p>	<p>8%</p> <p>12%</p> <p>32%</p> <p>16%</p> <p>12%</p> <p>3%</p> <p>4%</p>

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18.	residents 8. Differences in political party affiliations 9. Differences in religious beliefs 10. Differences in ethnic or linguistic background/race/caste/tribe 11. Other differences	8% 2% 4% 2%	5% 3% 4% 1%
19.	Have these problems ever lead to violence	Yes (53%) No (47%)	Yes (46%) No (54%)
20.	Get together with people for food/drink	18.8	22.6
21.	If not zero for item 21, were any of those people A. Of different ethnic or linguistic background/race/caste/tribe? B. Of different economic status? C. Of different social status? D. Of different religious groups?	Yes (76%) No (24%) Yes (47%) No (53%) Yes (62%) No (38%) Yes (17%) No (83%)	Yes (79%) No (21%) Yes (63%) No (37%) Yes (58%) No (42%) Yes (36%) No (64%)
22.	Safe from crime or violence when alone at home Responses 1. Very safe 2. Moderately safe 3. Neither safe nor unsafe 4. Moderately unsafe 5. Very unsafe	43% 32% 18% 5% 2%	36% 24% 22% 10% 8%
23.	How happy do you consider yourself		

	Responses	28%	48%
	1. Very happy	46%	26%
	2. Moderately happy	14%	12%
	3. Neither happy nor unhappy	8%	10%
	4. Moderately unhappy	4%	4%
	5. Very unhappy		
24.	Power to make important decisions in life		
	1. Totally unable to change life	23%	33%
	2. Mostly unable to change life	32%	27%
	3. Neither able nor unable	41%	28%
	4. Mostly able to change life	3%	10%
	5. Totally able to change life	1%	2%
25.	Recently how often have the people in community got together for meeting with government officials or political leaders		
	Responses		
	1. Never	3%	14%
	2. Once	15%	38%
	3. A few times (<5)	36%	19%
	4. Many times (>5)	46%	29%
26.	Did you vote on the last elections	Yes (98%) No (2%)	Yes (62%) No (38%)

The various items in the questionnaire were answered by the respondents from both the communities show the typical characteristics of their respective groups.

- Under the first indicator of social capital i.e. structural social capital, the respondents from both urban & rural community exhibited almost the same frequency of membership in associations and networks.

- Under second indicator of social capital i.e. cognitive social capital, respondents from rural community exhibited higher frequency in the matters related to trust and adherence to norms compared to their urban counterparts.
- Third and final indicator of social capital i.e. collective action, respondents from rural community exhibited higher frequency in this regard, showing they were ready to help others in their community even if it is not beneficial for them in any aspect.

The scores in the three main aspects of analysis found that, rural community respondents exhibited more social capital when compared to the urban community respondents. It can be concluded that social capital is high among rural communities than compared to the urban communities.

Limitations of the study

Though the core questions/items in the questionnaire as published in the World Bank Working paper 18 for the assessment of social capital among urban and rural communities provides an all round insight with respect to the topic, it could have been more comprehensive by including few more items/questions related to educational and caste/religion aspects in the questionnaire. The analysis of the data was time consuming and for further large number surveys, it might be a very complicated and difficult task. The analysis of data was done through tabular analysis and econometric analysis, which again is a limitation. The main limitation of tabular analysis is that only a few variables can be tabulated at once, making it difficult to discern social capital's contribution to the welfare of the household or to other development outcome variables

Conclusion

Social capital, though a sociological concept is a relatively new concept for the rest of social sciences. But assessing and understanding social capital through empirical evidence provided new insights into the concept from social work perspective. Generally we know that trust, peace and harmony is high in rural communities, but the evil practice of caste system is very much prevalent and widely followed in rural communities than compared to urban communities. In urban communities, due to economical, political, social and various other factors association between religions, caste, and gender are more common. It is good development that in few aspects in this study, it was found that there is more association among different castes, religions, classes of people in both rural and urban communities.

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