



## Social Capital and Social Well-Being: A Systematic Review

Mian Muhammad Ahamd Iqbal<sup>1</sup>, Ghazanafar Hussain<sup>2</sup>, Kashif Siddique<sup>3</sup>

Ph.D. Scholar, University Utara Malaysia, Email: [Iqbal\\_muhammadahmad@yahoo.com](mailto:Iqbal_muhammadahmad@yahoo.com)

Ph.D. Scholar, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Email: [ghazanafarhussain@gmail.com](mailto:ghazanafarhussain@gmail.com)

Lecturer, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Email: [kashif.siddique@bzu.edu.pk](mailto:kashif.siddique@bzu.edu.pk)

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### ABSTRACT

Social capital and social well-being are important social assets that play a vital role in any society's social and economic development. However, the major objectives of this systematic review are; to conceptualize social capital and social well-being and to identify if there is any relationship between these attributes. For this purpose, 49 studies were summarized from the database. The findings revealed that social capital is a multidimensional concept covering the three subtypes: bonding, bridging and linking capitals. These types are based on trust and reciprocity. Similarly, social well-being is also a multilevel construct that covers social integration, social acceptance, social contribution, social coherence and social actualization. Literature depicts a meaningful link between social capital and social well-being. However, only five studies in prior literature focused on the relationship between social capital and social well-being. Of these studies, only one study found the relationship between various types of social capital with social well-being. Future researchers should comprehensively integrate these constructs in their theoretical frameworks to fully operationalise the relationship between social capital and social well-being.

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Corresponding Author's Email: [kashif.siddique@bzu.edu.pk](mailto:kashif.siddique@bzu.edu.pk)

## 1. Introduction

Since Putnam (2005) scholarly contribution of bowling alone, social capital (SC) has received valuable attention of young academicians and researchers because it has influenced society in numerous ways, such as rapid economic growth, successful democratic governance, well-being and social stability. Coleman (1988) argued that social capital is an integrated social concept with a positive relationship with well-being, health and other valuable social and economic determinants. Similarly, Kawachi, Subramanian, and Kim (2008) narrated that in the prior literature, individual and collective forms of SC have been investigated in the context of health and other social indicators. Still, the SC is a vague concept and needs the attention of contemporary researchers for clarity.

Social well-being (SWB) refers to the feelings of wellness in the context of fulfilling the expectations of others in different paradigms of life. However, it is a position in which important needs of society are accomplished, and people live together peacefully and get a chance to participate in the development of society. C. L. M. Keyes (1998) argued that SWB is an assessment of one's functioning and place in the community. Breslow (1972) found that social well-being is valuable in health and related paradigms such as physical and mental aspects. This aspect is important in improving social performance, quality of life and social efficacy. Furthermore, Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener (2005) observed that people with a greater level of social well-being were consistently reported to have a greater level of life satisfaction in various domains, for example, marriage, health and income. Similarly, positive emotions also relate to social well-being and play a role in increasing young adults' life spans and mental health. Zumbo and Chan (2014) concluded that a person's intention to participate

in social work, friends circle, family roles, citizenship and social interactions directly influence all types of well-being. This literature summarizes the existing literature on the relationship between SC and SWB. It will also inform future research on the importance of SC increasing SWB among youth. To meet the objectives of this research, we will opt the following research questions.

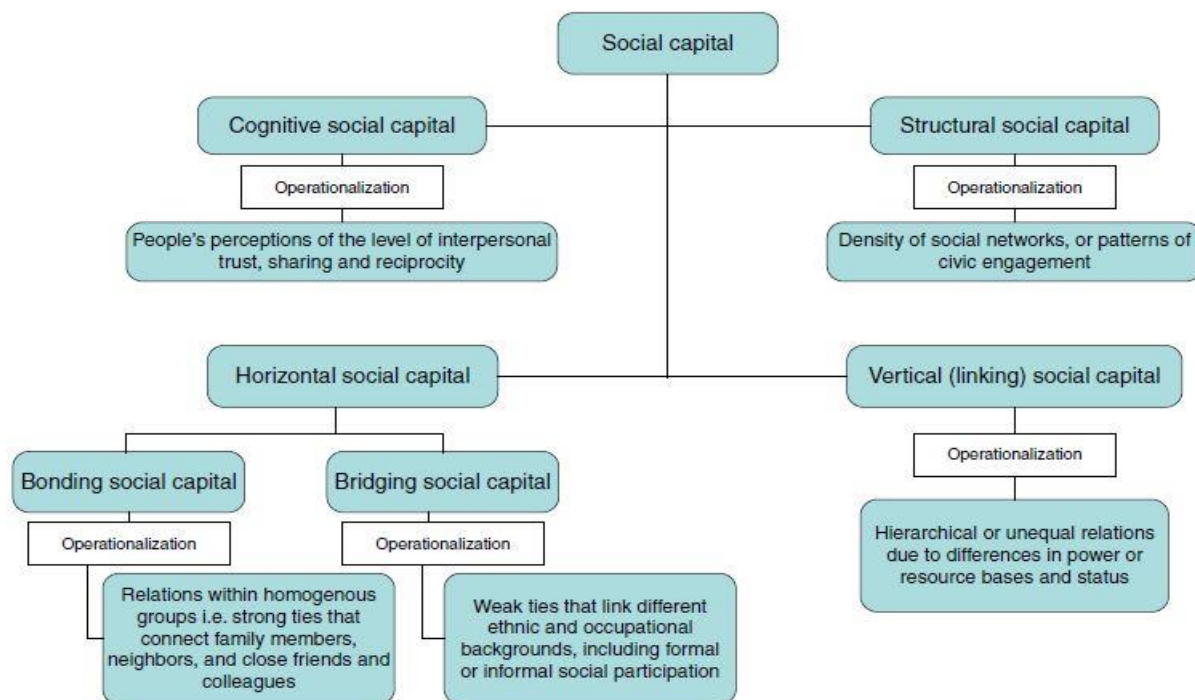
- How social capital and social well-being are defined?
- What type of social capital and social well-being were assessed?
- What is the relationship between social capital and social well-being?

## 2. Methodology

Researchers presented and organized the systematic. Eligible literature was identified using electronic databases such as Google, Elsevier, Springer link and Google scholar. Primary search items included the following variables; social capital, social well-being, and the link between both constructs. Due to the shortage of literature and limited access to the database, only 17 studies were shortlisted and systematically reviewed to determine the following research questions; how they defined social capital and types, how they defined SWB and types and the relationship between SC and SWB.

### 2.1. Social capital dimensions and theoretical framework

**Figure 1: Operationalisation of the social capital concepts**



**Source:** Figure original of Islam et al. (2006)

## 3. Results

### 3.1. How social capital defined

In the previous literature, Fukuyama (2000) argued that various researchers had defined social capital, but most defined the dimensions instead of social capital. According to Bourdieu (1986), SC estimates potential resources that exist in the consequences of social connections. Similarly, Putnam (2005) opined SC as a totality of social ties norms and reciprocity. Furthermore, Flap and De Graaf (1986) viewed SC as a person's personal or social networks and resources through which he is mobilized. In this context, Sprengers, Tazelaar, and Flap (1988) depicted that social capital is a collective functioning of the connected people and resources that tackle social problems. Here, SC is observed as a means of production to uplift the socio-economic status of society. Furthermore, Lin, Fu, and Hsung (2001) assumes

social capital as the existing community resources linked with the social hierarchy and mobilized for action.

### **3.2. What type of social capital was assessed?**

Advancement in research on social capital indicated that it is a multilevel construct with various domains such as bonding, bridging, and linking social capital, however these domains have also been discussed in prior literature (Putnam, 2005; Woolcock, 2001).

#### **3.2.1. Bonding social capital**

Bonding social capital defines as the web of social affiliations within similar groups in the community. It is constructed when strongly tied people such as family members and close friends provide substantive or emotional support to each other. In this situation, individuals have strong personal relations with other individuals with similar or a bit divergent backgrounds. Putnam (2005) depicted that bonding social capital deals with the connections among the social network members based upon the homogeneous groups, and the members of these groups are perceived to have close-knit ties. Similarly, Narayan and Cassidy (2001) concluded that bonding social capital has formal and informal diversity of connections. Informal networks include friends and family members, whereas formal networks include union members, work professionals and religion. This web of relationships represents the distinctive forms of value systems, internal trust, voluntary efforts, and particular types of networks. Furthermore, these networks can reinforce the effects on others.

#### **3.2.2. Bridging social capital**

Terrion (2006) argued that bridging social capital defines as the ties and connections across divergent social groups. Putnam (2005) argued that bridging social capital develops when individuals from divergent backgrounds build relationships with prevailing social networks in the community, such as diverse ethnic, religious or social groups. These individuals often have temporary formal relationships not based upon in-depth intimacy. As a result, bridging social capital broadens the new social horizons and world view that introduce new resources, opportunities and information. Conversely, bridging social capital provides little emotional support to the individuals (Putnam, 2005).

In the existing literature, for example, Szreter and Woolcock (2004) concluded that bridging social capital deals with the social bounds among people with divergent socioeconomic properties such as age, education and race. Similarly, Putnam (2005) opined that bridging social capital is a mechanism in which individuals may diffuse into horizontal and instrumental ties with others more often. Furthermore, the findings of Sabatini (2009) depicted that bridging social capital has weak and strong ties with acquaintances, neighbours and friends. In other prior literature, McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook (2001) and Lin et al. (2001) revealed that it is true that bridging social capital had important but productive social outcomes that are based on weak social networks.

#### **3.2.3. Linking social capital**

Linking social capital is the level at which individuals build links with the institutions and other individuals with reciprocal power or authority. These authorities provide access to services to the individuals, such as jobs and the economy (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004; Woolcock, 2001). Unlike bonding and bridging social capital, linking social capital also leads to new perspectives, values and ideas. In a somewhat, Narayan and Cassidy (2001) opined that linking social capital based on the power structure of the society facilitates the cross-cutting ties that play a central role in enhancing economic opportunities, and it may also exclude less powerful groups from society.

### **3.3. How social well-being defined**

According to the prior literature, social well-being refers to the feelings of wellness in terms of fulfilling the expectations of others in various domains of life. However, social well-being is a situation in which important needs of society are fulfilled, and people co-exist peacefully with various community development opportunities. Similarly, C. L. M. Keyes (1998) revealed that SWB refers to one's functioning and position in society. Mohammad Hassan Sharbatian (2011) concluded that SWB is an ability of a person to perform social roles effectively, monitor and evaluate social functioning and the quality of social bonds with other people, including relatives and social groups.

### **3.4. What type of social well-being was assessed?**

The concept of SWB of individuals has been nested under the community's social structure. Five core dimensions of social well-being evaluate the self in terms of an individual's respect regarding his social context. Two dimensions of SWB such as social contribution and social integration, deal with the feelings of attachment to the society, social support and social involvement. In contrast, one dimension of SWB, such as social acceptance, deals with the positive acceptance of other people by ignoring their differences. The last two dimensions of SWB, social actualization and social coherence, deal with a person's interest in society and trust in social groups and institutions (Chao, Scherer, & Montgomery, 2015; Cicognani, Albanesi, & Berti, 2001; C. L. Keyes, 2006).

#### **3.4.1. Social integration**

Social integration is one of the important types of SWB. According to C. L. Keyes (2006), social integration refers to the feelings of belongings and acceptance in society. In fact, it is an appraisal of a person's association with the other members of society and family in the terms in which he assumes himself as a part of the community and environment in which he lives (C. L. M. Keyes, 1998; Shasti & FALAMAKI, 2014). C. L. M. Keyes (1998) argued that in social life, strong integration of residents provides a foundation for social well-being. Furthermore, social integration originates from the feelings of collective fate, collective consciousness, belongings and interdependence that provide the potential benefits to social life. He further argued that it is an individual approach related to community functioning and is a valuable indicator to measure social well-being (C. L. M. Keyes, 1998).

#### **3.4.2. Social Acceptance**

Social acceptance is the second dimension of social well-being. According to C. L. Keyes (2006), social acceptance deals with social trust, accepting the view of the community and individuals, and the belief in the kindness of the residents. Similarly, DeWall and Bushman (2011) revealed that social acceptance is a social kinship that deals with personal acceptance and empowers the opinion of others in a community or group through qualities and character. On the other hand, prior research concluded that individuals' social acceptance and connectivity play a defensive role in boosting an individual's well-being and mental abilities (Arslan, 2018). Some researchers also revealed that social acceptance, connectivity and intimacy have been linked with individuals' well-being (Duru, 2015; Yıldız & Duy, 2014).

#### **3.4.3. Social Contribution**

Social contribution is the third important dimension of social well-being. It defines as a person's feelings that portray his life as valuable, and others admire his efforts in the community (C. L. Keyes, 2006). The concept of social well-being deals with the influence of residents' sense and involvement in the community because it manipulates the self in society (Prati, Albanesi, & Pietrantonio, 2016). Similarly, a sense of empowerment and we collectively produce the feelings that boost the social well-being of the society members and civic organizations (Mazzoni, Cicognani, Albanesi, & Zani, 2014). Another piece of evidence suggests that satisfaction with life and positive contribution enhance the sense of community among adults that relates to their well-being (Chipuer, Bramston, & Pretty, 2003).

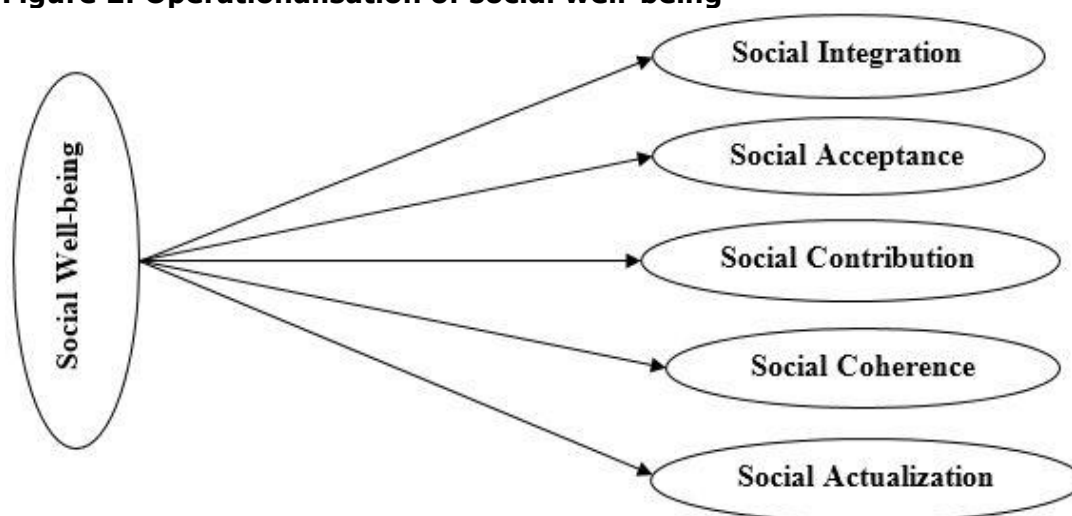
#### **3.4.4. Social Coherence**

In Keyes's model of social well-being, social coherence is the fourth important dimension. Social coherence conceptualizes as the people's understanding and knowledge of the community (C. L. Keyes, 2006). A sense of coherence is a positive aspect of people's thinking about their life and themselves. It deals with the belief and complying sense of security that relates to one's intentions about the external and internal environment that is manageable and predictable (Antonovsky, 1987).

#### **3.4.5. Social Actualization**

Social actualization is the fifth dimension of social well-being. Social actualization relates to the hopefulness about society's future or belief in its growth and positive potential (C. L. M. Keyes, 1998). Furthermore, social actualization also deals with the belief that society can change and positive development (Salehi et al., 2017).

**Figure 2: Operationalisation of social well-being**



**Source:** Figure original of Keyes (2006)

#### **4. Relationship between social capital and social well-being**

SC and SWB are important social assets. The literature revealed that SC had been significantly linked with various forms of well-being, such as psychological (Bano, Cisheng, Khan, & Khan, 2019) and subjective well-being (Kim & Kim, 2017). But a few studies (only five) are available in the database that showed the association between SC and SWB. For example, in research, Rhodes, Cordie, and Wooten (2019) found a significant association between SC and SWB. This study further revealed that SC and SWB vary in age and educational attainment. Similarly, Putnam (2005) concluded that higher social capital facilitates the link between social well-being and economic resources. Furthermore, in research, Westell (2005) reported that a higher level of SC was significantly related to the social and economic well-being of individuals and communities. It further concluded that bonding, bridging and linking social capital are significantly linked to social well-being. C. L. Keyes and Shapiro (2019) reported that SC, such as social support, trust, and collective efficacy, are significantly associated with social well-being. In conclusion one research shows that social capital, life satisfaction and quality of life predict social well-being among youth (Mohammad Hassan Sharbatian, 2011; Mohammad Hasan Sharbatian & Erfanian Ghasab, 2018).

#### **5. Discussion**

Social capital covers the sub-dimensions such as bonding, bridging and linking social capital. These dimensions are based on trust and reciprocity. Similarly, SWB covers the five sub-types: social acceptance, social integration, social contribution, social coherence and social actualization. Unfortunately, contemporary researchers have neglected these two important social assets. Especially, previous literature does not provide any evidence that signifies the relationship between bonding, bridging and linking social capital with social well-being. However, the researchers neglected the relationship between trust and reciprocity in existing and previous literature. To remove this research gap, researchers should conduct empirical studies in future. Rhodes et al. (2019) social capital and social well-being support the individuals through which they can learn the skills to work within the community. Along with social capital, consistent improvement in learning opportunities is needed through formal educational institutions to enhance social and economic well-being at all levels of society. In this lieu, community-based literacy classes and workplace professional development can also be helpful. Future research on social capital should also be utilized to understand and uncover the complex relationships in society.

Social capital and social well-being are important social assets. Social capital provides personal (Hoogerbrugge & Burger, 2018), physical (Ehsan, Klaas, Bastianen, & Spini, 2019), economic and social benefits to opt the prosocial behavior (Helliwell, Aknin, Shiplett, Huang, & Wang, 2017). SC is a form of social cohesion that has various positive outcomes. For example,

Duhaime, Searles, Usher, Myers, and Frechette (2004) concludes that social cohesion and trust are important components of social capital, and trust in social organizations, voluntary inclusion, social engagement, and access to social and economic informal networks can lead to demographic stability and provide safety, satisfaction and quality of life at the community level. Ache and Andersen (2008) state that for rapid social development, residents should be involved in joint activities (social capital) because it mobilizes resources, creates durable social cohesion and develops social relationships among the groups in society through strong and constant support.

Social well-being is associated with mental health (Bekalu, McCloud, & Viswanath, 2019) and social inequalities (Rossouw & Greyling, 2021). However, a large network of close and frequent relationships with family and friends give individuals a strong social support and opportunities to make and enjoy new acquaintances (Mouratidis, 2018). Similarly, the SWB of all society members is valuable because it facilitates social cohesion. Furthermore, social well-being in society strengthens the relationships between members, develops value systems, and reduces wealth inequalities (Britchenko & Bezpartochnyi, 2018). Social well-being is a capital of society that relates to social and economic outcomes. It is also a part of health and reflects a person's internal feelings and thoughts that reflect the level of satisfaction with the economic and social environment (Larson, Richards, Moneta, Holmbeck, & Duckett, 1996).

## 6. Conclusion

The major objective of this paper was to conceptualize social capital and social well-being and their relationship. For this purpose, 49 studies were summarized. The findings revealed that SC is a multidimensional concept covering the bonding, bridging and linking capital measured through trust and reciprocity. Similarly, SWB is a multilevel construct covering social integration, social acceptance, social contribution, social integration and social actualization. However, a few researchers focused on the relationship between SC and SWB. Especially only a single study revealed the relationship between various types of SC, such as bonding, bridging and linking SC with SWB. However, further research is suggested to verify this relationship and fulfill this gap.

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