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## ROLE OF NON-STATE ORGANIZATIONS IN STRENGTHENING SOCIAL CAPITAL: CASE STUDY OF MANSEHRA DISTRICT OF KP PROVINCE, PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

The building of functional linkages between non-profit/non-state organizations and other collaborators at various levels is a necessity to benefit the welfare of the rural poor. Pakistan is also embracing its inclusion in the list of economies that are considered to have weak social capital. Strengthening of social capital has a valuable contribution by the NGOs especially in the rangelands of Pakistan. The current study is designed to examine the role of non-governmental and non-state organizations in building up social capital. Data were taken from three different localities in the Mansehra district of Hazara region in Pakistan adopting qualitative and quantitative approaches. A weak organizational infrastructure in terms of horizontal and vertical principles (transparency, viability, integrity, accountability etc.) was found in all three study areas. The access to social capital at sites I & II obtained 1.98 and 1.78 respectively and residents of site III were found deprived. The study showed that rural people with low income (often referred to as poor) have lower social incomes compared to people with high- and medium-income levels (often referred as well off and better off). The limitations of time availability and social confidence results in no contact or social interaction among poor. A significant role of NGOs has been observed in bringing poor and oppressed people into mainstream social capital. The study delineates the increased involvement of registered and unregistered local groups/organizations in the development of rural community. Findings of the research also conclude that local community groups are more vital than that of the registered organizations due to their informal culture and true representation of practical needs of the community. The volunteers played an important role in creating social grants, and their inclusion in the form of a comprehensive social capital plan will result in refinement of services and overall betterment of society.

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### INTRODUCTION

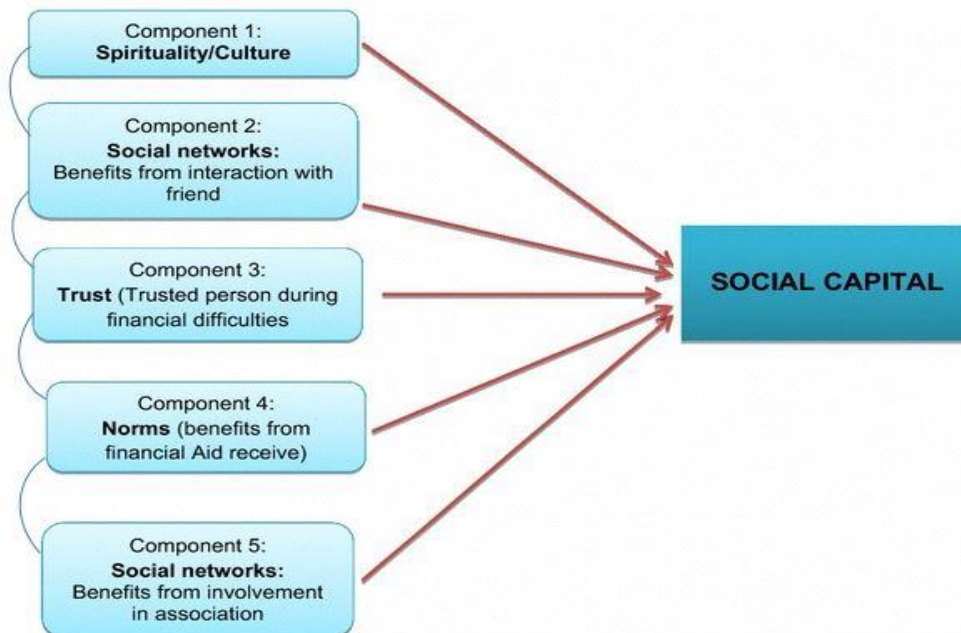
The concept of social capital has historical significance but the attention it gained in the academic and policy debates is not older than 1990s. The empirical and theoretical aspects of social capital have become the part

of literature in the last three decades. Currently its role in defining the socioeconomic phenomena has been the matter of discussion among researchers and academicians. Scientists carrying out research in this field usually restrict themselves to explain that why

growth of economies differ and who have equal access to resources, markets and technology in the modern world. Disparities at a larger scale among the economies despite having access to identical environment of production are critical challenges for the community of researchers (Bhandari and Yasunobu, 2009). In this regard role of all the involved stakeholders require revisions and their course of action need to be revisited. Non-state actors are the most promising and effective actors that play their role for cross sector stakeholders to reach out the most vulnerable residents of a community. Most likely the non-state actors operate in the situation and areas where the state is unable to act. The ability of an organization in a specific situation or for a specific cause is associated with their capacity of securing the resources (Kuyper *et al.*, 2017; Menashy, 2015). These non-state actors have to deal with two sort of clients alongside management of limited finances, lack of social knowledge and support. Success of the non-state actors is worthy when they create the social support for the local community with in diversified cultural landscape of area (Bacon *et al.*, 2012). Communication and networking are two skills through which junior members of non-state actors build a better social capital unlike the senior members of the organization. Lack of functioning of non-state actors is

reported due to the challenges like; social relations with local actors are not up to the mark, poor coordination efforts, lacking in balance for networking and imperfect efforts for fund raising (Adem, 2016). The concept of social capital is all about networking for valuable resources, this enables the members to recognize their obligation in the form of respect, friendship and gratitude. As it is the combination of physical and human capital, coexistence and interdependence of physical assets and ownership of individuals play a common role to ascertain the existence of social capital (Le Van *et al.*, 2018).

Social organizations prefer on creating ties among groups of individuals having similar characteristics. Organizations with higher level of networks do involve the community members with other social capitals for their exposure, independence and confidence. Ability of the non-state actors to reach influential characters and groups which are not liability to the organization, these associates turn out to be the reason of gaining trust and support for the non-state actors (Cunningham *et al.*, 2013). Social capital draws attention to multiple strings attached to each other with in social circle. Interconnected to each other and making together a capital can be best explained with the following framework:



Framework adapted from Saukani and Ismail (2019).

Interconnected components of the social capital highlight the adjacent branches or sub-divisions of social capital. Culture, networks, trust, norms and social circle together set the base and penetrate roots to create harmony for making an independent and productive society (Aldrich *et al.*, 2018). Social capital enables the connections within the social system by building trust and encouraging solidarity. In context of the above shared findings, the present research study was designed to analyze the role of non-state institutions in strengthening social capital in Northern-West region of Pakistan which is also refer to as Highland of Pakistan.

### Research Questions

This study aimed to probe following research questions;

- What is the distribution of research area into different regions on the basis of social capital?
- Why poor people have weak social capital or interaction?
- Why social capital decreases with the increase of economic capital?
- What is the role of volunteers in the development of social capital?

## MATERIALS & METHODS

### Nature of study

The present study was descriptive in nature. Collection of cross-sectional data through structured questionnaire was found to be best fit for the explanation of parameters included in this study.

### Study area and sampling procedure

The study was conducted in one of the five provinces of Pakistan – Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In this study, both

purposive and random sampling techniques were used for the selection of sample. District Mansehra was selected through purposive sampling procedure as the targeted study area being most populous district of Hazara region (Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2011). There is total 05 tehsils in Mansehra district. Total 360 respondents were selected from the three randomly chosen tehsils viz Bala Kot tehsil (Site I), Mansehra tehsil (Site II) and Darband tehsil (Site III) of the district (Yap *et al.*, 2013).

### Data collection and analysis

Structured interview schedule was used for collecting quantitative data. The instrument was pre-tested, validated and its reliability was ensured through Cronbach alpha technique while using SPSS. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews. The collected quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Situation of livelihood capitals

According to DFID, livelihood capitals are divided into five categories in the livelihood framework including (i) human capital (ii) Financial capital (iii) social capital (iv) physical capital and (v) natural capital. The entitlement of each livelihood capital in the research area is presented in the following sections:

### Human capital

The human capital of respondents was assessed by their educational status and access to training facilities. The data regarding educational profile of respondents was collected and is presented in Figure 1:

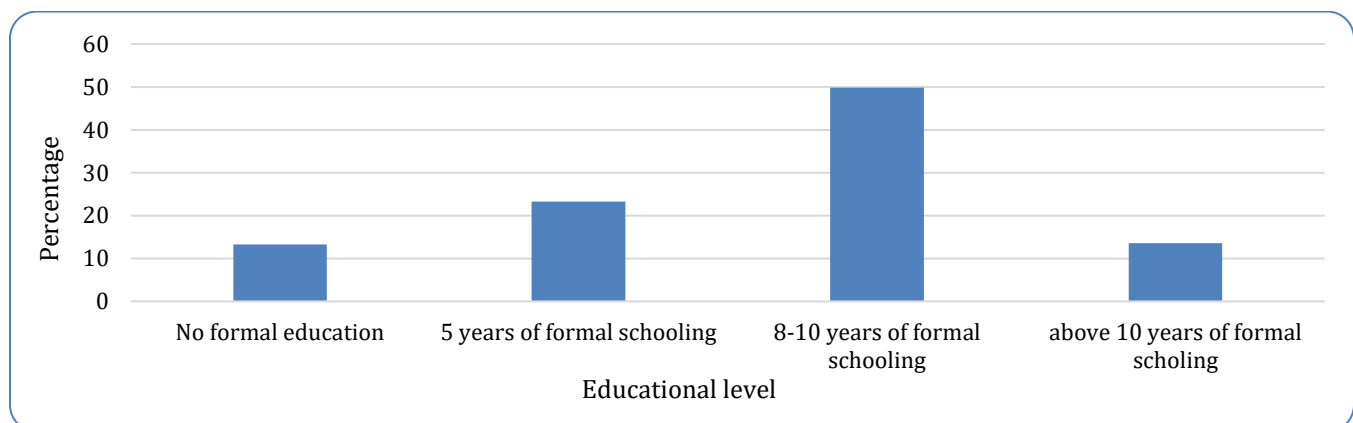


Figure 1. Educational profile of respondents in the research area.

Figure 1 shows that about half (49.8%) of respondents had less ten years of schooling. In this age of development and technology, ten years of schooling cannot be considered sufficient for overall human development. Only 13.6% of respondents had educational level of more than matriculation (10 years of schooling). Whereas, of the total respondents, 13.3% were illiterate. According to UNECSO report, education for all is pre-requisite for national development. The data regarding other component of human capital – receiving of training by the respondents is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Trainings received by the respondents.

Received any training	f	%
Yes	95	26.4
No	265	73.6
Total	360	100.0

The data tabulated in table shows that a high majority (73.6%) of respondents didn't receive any training from public and private institutions. Only 26.4% of respondents received training. This indicates the low level of human capital of people referring to the lack of education and training. The same being the reason of low level of human capital, resulted in limited employment and skill-based income generation opportunities, which lead to high level of poverty in the area. Low level of human capital is also responsible for low financial capital which in turn is associated with low level of social capital.

**Financial capital**

The financial capital of respondents was assessed with their income status. The data regarding monthly income of respondents during the year of data collection is visualized in Figure 2.

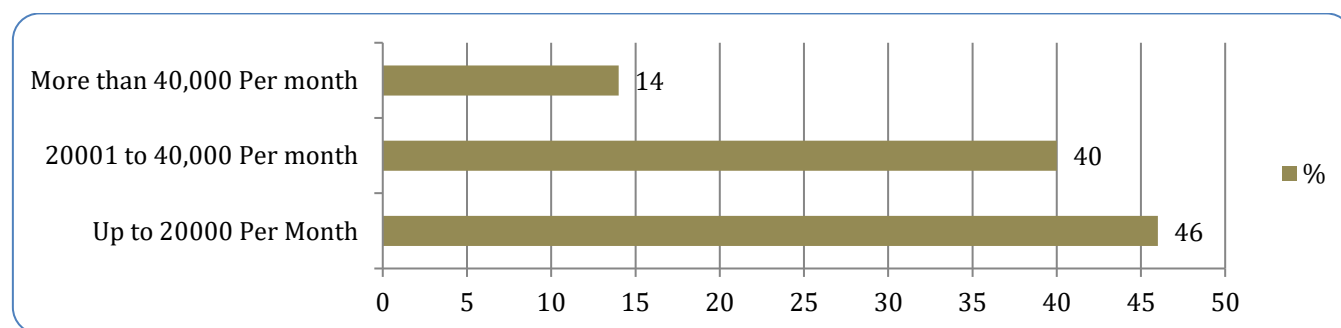


Figure 2. Data regarding monthly income (in Rs.) of respondents.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage of access to micro-credit and other Social Safety Nets (SSNs).

Access to micro-credit & SSNs	f	%
Yes	35	9.8
No	325	90.2
Total	360	100.0

The data shown in figure 2 indicates that the monthly income of majority (46.0%) of respondents was Rs. 20,000. The monthly income of only 13.8% of respondents was more than 40,000 Rs implying that the financial position of majority of the people in the research area was not so good. They had limited financial resources and capitals, which are not sufficient for healthy livelihood. Low level of financial capital was found to be one of the basic reasons behind low level of social capital as assessed during qualitative interviews

with the respondents. Access to micro-credit and other Social Safety Nets (SSNs)/financial institutions also plays role in assessing the level of financial capital of respondents in the research area. The data regarding access to micro-credit and other Social Safety Nets (SSNs) was assessed and presented in Table 2.

The data given in Table 2 shows that only 9.8% of respondents had access to micro-credit services of different commercial banks, rural financial institutions or non-governmental organizations. An overwhelming majority (90.2%) of respondents had no access to different micro-credit services and social safety nets.

**Level of social capital in the research area**

The research area was divided into three different sites. The level of social capital as possessed by the respondents in their respective areas was measured by

assessing their level of linkages and membership with any professional organization or local groups. The level was categorized as low (1), medium (2) and high (3).

Table 3 shows that in site I, the level of social capital was found to be higher with mean value of 1.98/3.00 followed by site II and site III with level of social capital 1.78/3.00 and 1.34/3.00, respectively. The level of social capital was assessed by their linkages with local traditional/cultural groups, village organizations/committees, national and international organizations. Five-point scale (1 to 5) was used for the

said purpose. The mean and SD of respective institutions were calculated and showed in Table 4.

Table 3. Mean and SD regarding level of social capital at all the three sites.

Sites	Mean± SD
Site I	1.98±0.655
Site II	1.78±0.561
Site III	1.34±0.522

Scale: 1=Low, 2- Medium, 3= High

Table 4. Mean and SD regarding linkages of community with diverse range of organizations/groups

Linkages with	Mean	SD
Local cultural groups	4.43	0.854
Village organizations	4.55	0.657
Village committees	3.94	0.707
Organizations working at national level	3.71	0.798
Organizations working at international level	2.83	1.056

(1= V. Low, 2= Low, 3= Medium, 4= High, 5= V. High)

The data presented in Table 4 shows that high level of linkages of community exist within village level organizations with highest mean (4.55/5.00) and SD (0.657). The mean of linkages of other institutions was 4.43/5.00 (with local cultural groups), 3.94/5.00 (village committees), 3.71/5.00 (national organizations) and 2.83/5.00 (international organizations).

This shows that community members were mostly interested in developing linkages with village level organizations and village level local cultural groups as compared to other national and international organizations working in the area. The reason for enhanced interest to work and engage with development-oriented activities of local based groups or committees was due to their better understanding of the development issues of the community and their willingness to work within the framework of local and traditional culture. Reasons for low level of social capital were also assessed by consulting the respondents. The responses of community members were measured with the help of three-point likert scale as 1 to 3 (1 for low, 2 for medium, 3 for high). The mean and S standard deviation (SD) of three major reasons (Lack of time, lack of physical capital, and limited financial capital) on the basis of self-perception of people of research area is given in Table 5.

Table 5. Perceived reasons for low level of social capital.

Reasons	Mean	SD
Lack of time	2.11	0.687
Lack of physical capital	2.19	0.692
Limited financial capital	2.17	0.680

1= Disagree, 2= Undecided, 3= Agree

Among three basic reasons of low social capital in the research area, lack of physical capital in the form of land resources was on the top with highest mean (2.19/3.00). This indicated the importance of physical land (ownership) by the rural people. Research studies conducted by different organizations like USDA (2007) and researchers Yang *et al.* (2018) and Hassan and Nazem (2015) also indicated the importance of land resources in rural settings and farming being the major activity for income earning. It was noted during data collection that in the area people had small land holdings, which is not sufficient to meet the needs of entire family members. Due to this reason they used to involve in other nonfarm, related income generating activities. Due to limited land resources, people used to cultivate their land through traditional agricultural practices that lead to low agricultural /farm productivity. All these reasons lead to high poverty rate

and also express the situation of food insecurity in the area. Expecting dependence of an individual on different stakeholders of the society was estimated to find the feasibility of the social capital. This has led to the identification of those potential sources which can contribute to the financial wellbeing of the impoverished individual. That's why perception of highland farmers was recorded to identify the potential source in a social capital as given in Table 6.

Table 6. Perceived assistance sources for highland farmers.

Sources	Category	
	Yes	No
Close relatives (1)	34	29
Distant relatives (2)	06	14
Neighbours (3)	23	32
Friends (4)	28	19
Co-farmers (5)	29	09
No one (0)	65	65

Dependence has been found to be the fundamental element to create the base of social capital. Even off approach in the social capital requires the practical nature of dependence. Maximum number of respondents (14.4%) conveyed that they would like more people in the social capital for their assistance. On the other hand, there were same number of respondents who opposed the above stance. This situation almost declaring the stance "no assistance-source available" had no standing that's why it could be regarded as null and void. After that other prominent figure came up against the source "close relatives", 29 respondents said that they do not see their close relatives as source of assistance and 34 opposed this stance. In contrary to this (Shaffril *et al.*, 2020) who stated that digital sources are more impactful than the traditional one.

As this study was to explore about strengthening of the social capital and requisites of a social circle for having a physical interaction as well for maintaining trust among stakeholders (Guillén *et al.*, 2015). Another finding from above table depicts that distant relative as a source of assistance obtained the lowest response by the respondents. It is proven from the facts that close relatives, friends and co-farmers could be a potential source of assistance in a social capital designed around a farmer.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Study concludes that site I was the prominent beneficiary, which resulted in maintaining the higher social capital compared to areas II and III. The organization's weak linkages in horizontal and vertical manners were found in all three study areas. It has been found that people with low income (often referred to as poor) have lower social incomes compared to people with higher and middle-income levels (often referred to as better off and well off). It has been reported that due to the low level of resources and the lack of time for poor people they often have no contact or social interaction. For bringing those people in mainstream non-governmental organizations have played a major role as these institutions particularly targeted the poor and oppressed personals.

Respondents of this study reported that although registered and unregistered local groups / organizations work to develop rural communities by increasing their participation in community development activities, the effectiveness of local traditional groups is more important than registered development organizations. The reason behind these circumstances is that local traditional groups operate within the framework of local culture by representing the real and practical needs of community members. It has been concluded that volunteers play a common role in creating social grants, especially for the poor. They have devoted much of their time to serving the people. For their appreciation and motivation, there should be an inclusive approach so that their interest is valued and aroused for benefitting in a true sense. For making their efforts and participation responsive, they should be involved in the decision-making process at initial level. This technique will attract quality, quantity and trust in the social capital and it will further pave the way for making social exchange possible among higher and lower-level organizations.

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