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Does More Social Capital Always Mean More Civic Engagement? The Role of Varying Levels of Bonding and Bridging Social Capital in the Development of Community and Political Civic Engagement among Pakistani University Students

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Abstract

This study investigates whether higher levels of bonding social capital, bridging social capital, or a combination of both, are linked to increase the participation in both community and political civic engagement. The research used a quantitative design. Multistage sampling was used to select the sample of 788 students from three universities in Lahore, Pakistan. Analysis of covariance showed that both bonding and bridging social capital, independently and together, significantly predicted higher levels of community civic engagement. While both bonding and bridging social capital separately predicted increased political civic engagement, the combination of high levels of both types of social capital did not show a significant effect on political participation. These findings emphasize the intricate relationship between different forms of social capital and their varying influence on different types of civic engagement. The results suggest that fostering strong connections within social groups and across diverse social groups is crucial for encouraging active citizenship among university students.

1. Introduction

The active involvement of students in community life, political activism, and other forms of civic expression can significantly impact individuals well-being (Flanagan & Joseph, 2011) and the vitality of democratic institutions (Kahne & Spote, 2008; Limber & Kaufman, 2002; Trolan & Barnhardt, 2017). Civic engagement entails the proactive participation of individuals in community affairs and political processes to enact positive change (Bobek, 2011; Ehrlich, 2000). Within higher education, civic engagement encompasses a range of activities, from classroom-based learning experiences to extracurricular involvement in student organizations and political campaigns (Miller & Gunnels, 2020).

Several scholars stress that colleges and universities are responsible for fostering an environment that nurtures civic-mindedness and democratic participation among their students (Kahne & Spote, 2008; McMillan, 2004). Colleges and universities possess a distinctive opportunity to foster civic-mindedness and democratic engagement among students. By purposefully integrating civic learning and participation into the academic curriculum and extracurricular programming, these institutions can assist students in developing the requisite knowledge, skills, and social capital to become active and impactful citizens (McMillan, 2004; Miller & Gunnels, 2020; Trolan & Barnhardt, 2017).

Moreover, existing literature suggests that in countries with ill-designed democratic systems, undemocratic governments, or authoritarian regimes, the social movements and activist efforts can provide marginalized communities with a means to advocate for their unmet needs and suppress interests (Chen & Moss, 2018; Deveaux, 2018; Foley & Edwards, 1996). These grassroots initiatives can serve as a powerful counterbalance to the limitations of formal political channels, giving voice to underrepresented groups and challenging the status quo (Hardina, 2006). By organizing protests, strikes, petitions, and other forms of civic engagement, marginalized communities can draw attention to their concerns, demand accountability from authorities, and work toward a more inclusive and participatory democracy (Amenta et al., 2010; Marien et al., 2010; Weldon, 2011).

These circumstances are particularly relevant in the context of Pakistan, where the country's democratic structures have been criticized as being inadequately designed (Adil & Umar, 2018; Bibi, 2018; Rizvi, 2015; Waqas & Khattak, 2017). In such environments, citizen-led "counter-power" or "counter-democracy" initiatives, as described by Rosanvallon and Goldhammer, (2008), become essential for maintaining trust and legitimacy in the political system. These initiatives can take the form of oversight, prevention, and judgment of government and other authorities' actions, as well as civic engagement through voting, protests, strikes, petitions, and social/political movements (Rosanvallon & Goldhammer, 2008). Examining the factors influencing civic engagement, particularly among university students, is an essential area of scholarly inquiry for understanding and strengthening participatory democracy in Pakistan.

Besides, Pakistan is a developing nation with a complex socio-political context, and university students play a vital role in shaping the country's future (Saud, 2020; Saud et al., 2020). The Pakistani government has systematically undermined critical thinking (Bushra & Huma, 2020; Shahzadi et al., 2021), civic education, and civic values (Ahmad, 2021; Ullah, 2020), thereby constraining opportunities for the fostering of civic engagement among university students (Ayub et al., 2020; Mahmood, 2014; Miller & Gunnels, 2020; Rafique et al., 2016). Moreover, the Pakistani government frequently interferes with and restricts student unions, prioritizing the personal interests of various political parties and government authorities instead of promoting the development of community and political civic engagement among university students (Javid, 2019; Mahmood, 2014).

Understanding the factors that influence the civic engagement of this student population beyond civic education, skills, and knowledge is crucial for fostering a more participatory and inclusive society within Pakistan. Therefore, this study has investigated the role of bonding and bridging social capital in developing community and political civic engagement.

Communities with greater social capital are more prepared to collaborate and support each other in times of natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and famines (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Dynes, 2006; Li & Tan, 2019; Mimaki & Shaw, 2007). The research on Pakistani university students confirms that social connections and trust are essential predictors of civic engagement (Jalalani & Shah, 2019). Through active participation in student organizations, community projects, and volunteer initiatives, students gain valuable skills such as communication, leadership, and collaboration, reinforcing the social fabric and enabling collective action (Boyd & Brackmann, 2012; Levine, 2003; Voight & Torney-Purta, 2013). Participation in campus organizations, especially those focused on civic issues, can help students build bonding and bridging social capital, strengthening their commitment to social and political involvement (Boyd & Brackmann, 2012; Campbell, 2000; Carpenter et al., 2011; Trolan & Barnhardt, 2017). Ultimately, cultivating both bonding and bridging social capital on college campuses is crucial for developing well-rounded, civically engaged students who can contribute to the vitality of democratic civil society (Kuh, 2009).

Prior research has examined the relationship between social capital and civic engagement, emphasizing social capital as a predictor of civic engagement (Collins et al., 2014; Fahmy, 2006; Jalalani & Shah, 2019; Prewitt et al., 2014; Schneider, 2007). Moreover, Jalalani & Shah, (2019) study focus on the general relationship between social capital and civic engagement in Pakistani context, neglecting to examine how varying degrees or level of social capital differentially affect community and political civic engagement. Furthermore, Jalalani & Shah, (2019) have only focus on the community based civic engagement and ignore the political based civic engagement. Besides, only one study has investigated the level of bonding and bridging social capital and its role in the development of community and political civic engagement has been conducted in Western contexts (Loflin, 2003), limiting the generalizability of findings to non-Western settings like Pakistan. The cultural and societal norms governing social interactions and civic participation in Pakistan necessitate a context-specific understanding of these relationships. This research examines the nuanced relationship between varying levels of bonding and bridging social capital and their differential impacts on the gradual development of community and political civic engagement among Pakistani university students. In other words, this study investigates whether there is an inflection point where excessively low, medium, or high levels of bonding and bridging social capital may cease to promote or potentially even hinder the development of civic engagement within this demographic.

2. Literature Review

The existing scholarly literature has extensively examined social networks and social capital, asserting that fostering both bonding and bridging social capital among youth and students can yield inherent benefits (Alaa et al., 2018; Albrecht & Smerdon, 2022; Khalid Mahmood, 2015; Mahmood et al., 2018). Researchers have also examined the presence of online bonding and bridging social capital among Pakistani university students (Mahmood et al., 2018; Shahzad & Omar, 2021), and how these online social capital forms may contribute to the development of both online and offline political participation among Pakistani youth (Shahzad & Omar, 2021).

However, few studies have specifically investigated the levels of bonding and bridging social capital and their relationship to civic engagement in western society (Loflin, 2003). Although existing research offers some understanding of civic participation among Pakistani youth (Rafique et al., 2016; Munir & Zaidi, 2024), notable gaps persist. Specifically, scholars have primarily focused on examining factors other than social capital, such as fostering civic awareness, responsibility, and behaviors (Rafique et al., 2016), as well as civic education (Munir & Zaidi, 2024), with a primary emphasis on only political-based civic engagement in Pakistan. However, these studies have been limited exploration of alternative forms of civic engagement within the Pakistani context, including community-based activities, volunteering, and social activism (Rafique et al., 2016; Munir & Zaidi, 2024). Although, there is a lack of empirical research specifically on Pakistani context to investigating the role of social capital, both bonding and bridging, in fostering community and political civic engagement among university students. While other researchers by Jalalani and Shah (2019), who look at the role of social capital in the development of civic engagement among Pakistani youth, it has not specifically addressed the two distinct forms of civic engagement examined, community and political civic engagement, in the former study. Jalalani & Shah (2019) ignore to focuses on the dimension of politics to measure the civic engagement. They only focus on community dimension to measure the civic engagement. Furthermore, Jalalani & Shah (2019), research did not delve into the specific levels of social capital, from low to medium to high, and their contribution to the development of civic engagement. This research article aims to address these gaps by examining the impact of different levels of bonding and bridging social capital on the community and political civic engagement of Pakistani university students.

2.1. Research objective

- 1.To investigate the level of community civic participation of University students increased by the higher level of student's bonding social capital.
- 2.To examine the level of community civic participation of University students increased by the higher level of student's bridging social capital.
- 3.To examine the level of community civic participation of University students increased by the higher level of combined bonding and bridging social capital.
- 4.To study the level of political civic participation of University students increased by the higher level of student's bonding social capital.

5. To investigate the level of political civic participation of University students increased by the higher level of student's bridging social capital.
6. To study the level of political civic participation of University students increased by the higher level of combined bonding and bridging social capital.

2.2. Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: University students with higher levels of bonding social capital will report higher levels of community civic participation compared to those students with lower levels of bonding social capital.

Hypothesis 2: University Students with higher levels of bridging social capital will report higher levels of community civic participation compared to those students with lower levels of bridging social capital.

Hypothesis 3: University Students with higher levels of combined bonding and bridging social capital will report higher levels of community civic participation compared to those students with lower levels of bonding social capital.

Hypothesis 4: University Students with higher levels of bonding social capital will report higher levels of political civic participation compared to those students with lower levels of bonding social capital.

Hypothesis 5: University Students with higher levels of bridging social capital will report higher levels of political civic participation compared to those students with lower levels of bridging social capital.

Hypothesis 5: University Students with higher levels of combined bonding and bridging social capital will report higher levels of political civic participation compared to those students with lower levels of combined bonding and bridging social capital.

Hypothesis 6: University Students with higher levels of combined bonding and bridging social capital will report higher levels of political civic participation compared to those students with lower levels of combined bonding and bridging social capital.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample technique and sample size

The study employed a quantitative research methodology, utilizing a survey research design. The target population consisted of Pakistani university students. The research was conducted in Lahore, the second-largest city in Pakistan, as Mahmood et al., (2018) mentioned that Lahore city known to have a higher concentration of educational institutions compared to other cities in the country. Consequently, Lahore attracts students from various regions of Pakistan for their higher education pursuits (Mahmood et al., 2018).

The study employed a probability sampling approach. Specifically, the researchers used a multi-stage sampling technique. In the first stage, three universities were randomly selected from the list of Higher Education Commission recognized institutions. In the second stage, proportional samples were drawn from the student populations of each selected university. The third stage involved non-proportional stratified sampling, with the strata representing gender (male and female).

The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane formula. The study employed a confidence interval of 6% and a 95% confidence level. The target population at the University of the Punjab consisted of 36,912 students pursuing bachelor, master (two years of undergraduate), MPhil, and MS degrees at the time when data were collected. Using the Taro Yamane formula, the sample size for PU was determined to be 265. Similarly, the population size at Government College University was 10,662, with a corresponding sample size of 260. For the University of Lahore, the population was 18,146, and the sample size was 263. The total sample size across the three universities was 788, with an equal representation of 50% female and 50% male students.

3.2. Conceptualization and Operationalization

The study employed a survey methodology, using a questionnaire as the data collection instrument. The questionnaire utilized a respondent-administered format, and consisted of closed-ended questions.

Conceptualization

Social capital refers to the interconnections between individuals, comprising social networks and the resulting norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness (Putnam, 2000). These social networks exhibit two distinct forms: bonding social capital and bridging social capital (Putnam, 2001). Bonding social capital is characterized by inward-looking networks, wherein members share homogeneous identities in terms of family background, social class, race, and ethnicity. This form of social capital fosters strong ties, marked by loyalty, reciprocity, mutual benefits, emotional support, trust, and solidarity among family and close friends (Putnam, 2001; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). The homogeneous nature of these networks encourages exclusive group identities and antagonism towards outsiders (Putnam, 2000).

Conversely, bridging social capital consists of outward-looking networks that encompass diverse social groups. It supports more tentative relationships, lacking intense emotional connections, but provides a broader range of benefits, including external information, expanded worldviews, and generalized trust. Bridging social capital is defined by respect and mutuality in the relationships between the heterogeneous network members (Granovetter, 1973; Kavanaugh et al., 2005; R. Putnam, 2001; Putnam, 2000; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). Civic engagement is the act of working to make a positive difference in one's community, through both political and non-political means, by harnessing knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to promote the public good. This definition encompasses both an internal orientation towards community involvement and the actual behavioral manifestation of this belief (Ehrlich, 2000; Stephenson, 2010).

Operationalization

In this study the tool to measure bonding and bridging social capital were adapted from Williams, (2006). Similarly, the tools to assess community and political civic engagement were adopted from Stephenson, (2010) and Loflin, (2003) researches. Two dimensions are used to measure the indicator of civic engagement. One is community involvement or civic engagement which further divided into two domains that is “community civic Engagement Internal orientation” and “community civic Engagement Behavior orientation”.

The second is Political Engagement term in which try to grasp the explicit political engagement value which are bolster (support) both cognitive and behavior engagements. However, Stephenson's tools were found to be inadequate in capturing the nuances of student political engagement behavior. Therefore, additional measurement items were incorporated after pilot testing to better reflect political participation among the student population. So after the pilot testing some measurement were added to measure the behavior orientation in politics from other scholar (Loflin, 2003). The “political behavior orientation” based on the individuals join any protest, boycott some products for political reasons, and participate in election to cast the vote, and meet any politicians or write any letter to them.

4. Data Entry

Following the data collection through questionnaire, the data was entered into SPSS software. The data was also recoded to align with the analysis of the research questions and hypotheses, as explained in detail below.

4.1. Recoding of Index

To address and analyze the research questions, the independent and dependent variables were recoded. The Likert scale responses used to measure bonding and bridging social capital were recoded into a binary format. Specifically, "strongly disagree," "disagree," and "neutral/don't know" responses were assigned a code of "0," while "agree" and "strongly agree" responses were coded as "1." This binary coding scheme, where "0" represents "no" and "1" represents "yes".

Table 1 Frequency for the Bonding Social Capital Index

Number of Bonding Social Capital relationship	Frequency (Yes)	Percent	Cumulative %
10.00	11	1.4	1.4
9.00	15	1.9	3.3
8.00	71	9.0	12.3
7.00	124	15.7	28.0
6.00	127	16.1	44.2
5.00	141	17.9	62.1
4.00	92	11.7	73.7
3.00	93	11.8	85.5
2.00	62	7.9	93.4
1.00	37	4.7	98.1
0.00	15	1.9	100.0
Total	788	100.0	100.0

Table 1 presents the frequencies for the bonding social capital index. Some cells had relatively low frequencies, with 1.9% of respondents reporting no bonding relationships.

Table 1.1 Category Frequencies for the Bonding and Bridging Social Capital Indices

Category							Total	
	Low		Medium		High		N	%
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Bonding Social Capital	207	26.3	360	45.7	221	28.0	788	100
Bridging Social Capital	110	14.0	209	26.5	469	59.5	788	100

The recoded bonding social capital index, as shown in Table 1.1, measured this construct at three levels. The low level of bonding social capital represented respondents who reported zero to three bonding networks (n = 207; 26.3%). The medium level of bonding social capital corresponded to respondents who indicated four to six bonding social capital (n = 360; 45.7%). The high level of bonding social capital was characterized by respondents who reported seven to ten bonded networks (n = 221; 28.0%).

Table 1.2 Frequency for the Bridging Social Capital Index

Number of Bridging Social Capital relationship	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
10	148	18.8	18.8
9	151	19.2	37.9
8	99	12.6	50.5
7	71	9.0	59.5
6	91	11.5	71.1
5	64	8.1	79.2
4	54	6.9	86.0
3	48	6.1	92.1
2	24	3.0	95.2
1	18	2.3	97.5
0	20	2.5	100.0
Total	788	100.0	100.0

The bonding social capital index was recoded and presented in Table 1.2, indicating the frequency. Similarly, the bridging social capital index was also recoded, as shown in Table 1.1. This measure of bridging social capital was divided into three levels: low, where respondents reported zero to three bridging networks ($n = 110$; 14.0%); medium, where respondents indicated four to six bridging relationships ($n = 209$; 26.5%); and high, where respondents reported seven to ten bridging relationships ($n = 469$; 59.5%). The measures of community and political civic engagement were also recoded. Specifically, responses indicating non-participation, such as "strongly disagree," "disagree," and "don't know," were assigned a code of 0, while "agree" and "strongly agree" responses, representing participation, were coded as 1.

The study incorporated additional demographic variables beyond the primary independent variables under investigation as control measures that are represented in table 1.3. The residential area was recoded such that urban dwellers were assigned a code of 1, while rural residents were coded as 0. Gender was recoded, with males coded as 0 and females as 1. Employment status was recoded, with part-time employment and employed individuals coded as 1, and unemployed individuals coded as 0. Ethnicity was recoded, with Punjabi ethnicity coded as 1 and all other ethnicities as 0. Social class was recoded, with upper class coded as 1 and lower and middle class coded as 0. Religious orientation was recoded, with Sunni coded as 1 and all other religious orientations as 0.

Table 1.3 Frequencies of covariates used in ANCOVA test

Covariate	Recoded			
	0 N	%	1 n	%
Gender	394	50.0	394	50.0
Resident Area	195	24.7	593	75.3
Economic Status	739	93.8	49	6.2
Ethnicity	126	16.0	662	84.0
Religion Orientation	272	34.5	516	65.5
Employment Status	650	82.5	138	17.5

5. Data Analysis

Statistical tests were employed to address the various research questions. Specifically, analysis of covariance was used to examine the causal relationships between bridging/bonding social capital and community and political civic engagement. Specifically, they employed two ANCOVA models - one with community civic engagement as the dependent variable, and another with political civic engagement as the dependent variable. Additionally, ANCOVA models allow researchers controlled for the covariates of ethnicity, religious orientation, social class, employment status, residential background, and gender.

5.1. Post Hoc Test

The analysis of covariance demonstrated the significant main effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables. However, to determine which specific categories of the independent variables were most significant, the researchers conducted post-hoc Tukey's tests. This allowed them to assess how the incremental increases in bonding and bridging social capital from low to middle to high levels contributed to the development of civic engagement.

5.2. Analysis of Covariance on Demographic information, Bonding and Bridging Social Capital and Community Civic Engagement

The findings suggest that Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were supported, as the statistical significance levels (p -values) were less than 0.05. Moreover, the analysis revealed a significant positive main effect of students' bridging social capital on their community civic engagement, $F = 101.619$, $p < .05$. As depicted in Table 2, the mean level of community civic engagement increased as students' bridging social capital progressed from low (3.48) to high levels (7.58). Furthermore, the bridging social capital accounted for approximately 34% of the variance in community civic engagement, as indicated by the large effect size ($\eta^2 = .343$).

Table 2 Mean and Standard Deviation of Community Civic Engagement by Categories of Bonding and Bridging Social Capital

		Community civic engagement	
		M	SD
Bonding social capital	Low	5.26	2.987
	Medium	6.63	2.180
	High	7.55	1.830
Bridging social capital	Low	3.48	2.558
	Medium	5.77	2.328
	High	7.58	1.695

Note. M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation

The results indicate that students' bonding social capital had a significant positive main effect on their community civic engagement, $F = 10.840$, $p < .05$, as reported in Table 2.1. Specifically, the mean level of community civic engagement increased from low bonding networking (5.26) to high levels of bonding social capital (7.55). Furthermore, the bonding social capital accounted for 11.8% of the variance in community civic engagement, based on the $Eta^2 = .118$, which represents a small to medium effect size.

Table 2.1 Model of ANCOVA: the association between Bonding and Bridging Social Capital and Community Civic Engagement

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F
Ethnicity	24.342	1	24.342	6.423**
Religion Orientation	13.076	1	13.076	3.450
Employment	.035	1	.035	.009
Gender	22.764	1	22.764	6.007**
Resident Area	.137	1	.137	.036
Social Class	1.563	1	1.563	.412
Main effect				
Bridging Social Capital	770.211	2	385.106	101.619***
Bonding Social Capital	82.158	2	41.079	10.840***
Two-way Interaction				
Bonding X Bridging	62.060	4	15.515	4.094**
Explained	2929.430	773	3.790	
Residual	38443.000	788		
Total	4850.329	787		

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < 0.5$

The results indicate a significant interaction effect between bonding and bridging social capital on community civic engagement, $F(4,788) = 4.094$; $p < .05$. As shown in Table 2.2, the mean level of community civic engagement was 3.00 for individuals with lower levels of both bonding and bridging social capital, and this increased to 7.88 for those with higher levels of both types of social capital. This interaction accounted for 2.4% of the variance in community civic engagement, $Eta^2 = .024$.

Table 2.2 Mean and Standard Deviation of Community Civic Engagement by Interaction of both Bonding and Bridging Social Capital of Students

		Bridging Social Capital					
		Low		Medium		High	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Bonding Social Capital	Low	3.00	2.63	4.85	2.45	7.52	1.69
	Medium	4.60	2.14	5.90	2.24	7.36	1.79
	High	3.71	2.14	6.66	2.01	7.88	1.54

Note. M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation

5.2.1. Post-Hoc Test

The results presented in the preceding tables indicate that there were significant effects of bonding and bridging social capital on community civic engagement. To determine which specific categories (low, middle, high) of the independent variables (i.e., bonding and bridging social capital) were significantly different in their influence on the dependent variable (community civic

engagement), the researchers conducted post-hoc analyses. As shown in Table 2.3, the differences between the categories of both bonding and bridging social capital were statistically significant and positively related to community civic engagement. This suggests that as students' levels of bonding and bridging social capital increased, their community civic engagement also tended to increase correspondingly.

Table 2.3 Main Effect of Bonding and Bridging Social Capital on Community Civic Engagement through Tukey's Test of Significance

Bonding Social Capital		Mean Difference	Bridging Social Capital		Mean Difference
Low	Medium	-1.377*	Low	Medium	-2.28*
	High	-2.296*		High	-4.10*
Medium	Low	1.377*	Medium	Low	2.28*
	High	-0.919*		High	-1.82*
High	Low	2.296*	High	Low	4.10*
	Medium	0.919*		Medium	1.82*

*p < .05

5.2.2. Covariates

The study used covariates as control variables. As reported in Table 2.1, the covariates had a significant positive main effect on community civic engagement. Specifically, students who were Punjabi, had a Sunni religious orientation, were employed, were female, came from a higher social class, and had an urban residential background, exhibited higher levels of community civic engagement. The covariate with the largest main effect was ethnicity, $F(1,788) = 6.423$; $p < .05$, which accounted the main effect that 1% of the variance in community civic engagement ($Eta^2 = .010$), representing a small effect size. Gender had the second largest main effect, $F(1,788) = 6.007$; $p < .05$, the main effect explaining less than 1% of the variance in community civic engagement $Eta^2 = .002$. Overall, the model incorporating bonding and bridging social capital as predictors of community civic engagement was presented in Table 4.1.

5.3. Demographic Information, Bonding and Bridging Social Capital and Political Civic Engagement

The results indicate that students' bonding social capital had a significant positive main effect on their political civic engagement, $F(2,788) = 11.022$; $p < .05$ as reported in Table 4.5. Specifically, the mean level of political civic engagement increased as students' bonding social capital progressed from low (3.14) to high levels (5.70), as shown in Table 2.4. Furthermore, the bonding social capital accounted for 14.2% of the variance in political civic engagement, based on the $Eta^2 = .142$ value, which represents a moderate effect size.

Table 2.4 Standard Deviation and Mean of Political Civic Engagement by Categories of Bonding and Bridging Social Capital

		Political civic engagement	
		M	SD
Bonding social capital	Low	3.14	2.56
	Medium	3.99	2.33
	High	5.70	2.295
Bridging social capital	Low	2.32	2.004
	Medium	3.66	2.315
	High	4.96	2.499

Note. M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation

The findings revealed a significant positive main effect of students' bridging social capital on their political civic engagement $F(2,788) = 21.637$; $p < .05$, as indicated in Table 4.5. Specifically, the mean level of political civic engagement increased as students progressed from low (2.32) to high levels of bridging social capital (4.96), as depicted in Table 2.4. Furthermore, the bridging social capital accounted for approximately 14% of the variance in political civic engagement, as suggested by the $Eta^2 = .139$, which represents a moderate effect size.

Table 2.5 Model of ANCOVA: the association between Bonding and Bridging Social Capital and Political Civic Engagement

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F
Ethnicity	79.140	1	79.140	16.113***
Religion Orientation	7.849	1	7.849	1.598
Employment Status	1.862	1	1.862	.379
Gender	97.693	1	97.693	19.891***
Resident Area	1.272	1	1.272	.259

Social Class	1.148	1	1.148	.234
Main effect				
Bonding Social Capital	108.266	2	54.133	11.022***
Bridging Social Capital	212.537	2	106.268	21.637***
Two-way Interaction				
Bonding X Bridging	27.110	4	6.778	1.380
Explained	3796.598	773	4.912	
Residual	19406.000	788		
Total	5198.239	787		

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < 0.5$

The results presented in Table 2.5 indicate that the interaction effect between bonding and bridging social capital was not statistically significant for political civic engagement $F(4, 788) = 1.380$; $p = .239$). As such, the mean values for the interaction of these two types of social capital on political civic engagement were not reported.

5.3.1. Post-Hoc Test

To determine which specific categories of the independent variables had significantly different impacts on the dependent variable, post-hoc analyses were conducted. As shown in Table 2.6, the differences between the categories of both bonding and bridging social capital were statistically significant and positively related to political civic engagement. This suggests that as students' levels of bonding and bridging social capital increased, their political civic engagement also tended to increase correspondingly.

Table 2.6 Main Effect of Bonding and Bridging Social Capital on Community Political Engagement through Tukey's Test of Significance

Bonding Social Capital		Mean Difference	Bridging Social Capital		Mean Difference
Low	Medium	-.84*	Low	Medium	-1.34*
	High	-2.55*		High	-2.64*
Medium	Low	.84*	Medium	Low	1.34*
	High	-1.71*		High	-1.31*
High	Low	2.55*	High	Low	2.64*
	Medium	1.71*		Medium	1.31*

* $p < .05$

5.3.2. Covariates

The study employed covariates as control variables. As reported in Table 2.5, the covariates had a significant positive main effect on political civic engagement. Specifically, students who were of Punjabi ethnicity, had a Sunni religious orientation, having employed status, were female, belong to higher social class, and had an urban residential background exhibited higher levels of political civic engagement. Gender had the largest main effect, $F(1,788) = 19.891$; $p < .05$), accounting for less than 1% of the variance in political civic engagement ($\eta^2 = .008$), representing a small effect size. Ethnicity had the second largest main effect, $F(1,788) = 16.113$; $p < .05$), explaining 2.2% of the variance in political civic engagement ($\eta^2 = .022$). Overall, the model incorporating bonding and bridging social capital as predictors of political civic engagement was presented in Table 2.5.

6. Discussion

The findings of this article contribute valuable insights into the nuanced ways in which different types of social connections contribute to distinct forms of civic participation Pakistani university students. The study findings related to hypotheses from one through five hold significant implications for social capital theory, civic engagement theory, and social network theory. The finding suggests and affirms the previous researches that who develop strong interpersonal connections within their immediate social circles, as well as those who cultivate bridging ties across diverse social groups, are more likely to actively participate in civic engagement activities (Kirkby-Geddes et al., 2013; Loflin, 2003; Stephenson, 2010). As highlighted by other prior research, social capital empowers individuals and communities to collectively address problems and achieve beneficial outcomes that may not have been attainable otherwise (Coleman, 1988, 1994; Putnam, 1995, 2000). These results lend support to the core tenet of social capital theory, which posits that the capacity for collective action is rooted in social networks.

The research findings support a prior study that suggest that bonding social capital exhibits a more pronounced influence on the development of civic engagement than bridging social capital (Loflin, 2003), which contrasts with the prevailing perspective in social capital literature (Gittell & Vidal, 2000; Putnam, 2000). Scholars such as Gittell & Vidal, (2000) have characterized bonding social capital as primarily important for "getting by," and Putnam, (2000) has described it as a "sociological superglue," both of which may have underestimated the broader significance of bonding social capital for societal well-being.

This research finding also aligns with previous studies by Loflin, (2003), which indicate that bonding and bridging social capital explain more variation in community-based civic engagement compared to political civic engagement. Besides, political civic engagement may be shaped by other factors not measured in this research article, such as trust in government, politics, and politicians (Keeter et al., 2002; Merritt, 1998; Putnam, 2000; Skocpol, 1999), as well as civic awareness, civic responsibility (Rafique et al., 2016), as well as civic education (Munir & Zaidi, 2024).

However, the existing qualitative research by Saud, (2020) suggests that Pakistani youth are increasingly interested and involved in political matters, marking a shift from traditional patterns of limited youth political engagement. Factors like family ties, caste systems, and deference to elders may have previously discouraged young people's political participation. Saud, (2020) finding asserts the only those peer groups, friends, and social networks help in cultivating political consciousness and encouraging political civic engagement among Pakistani youth, who discuss political news, share opinions, and expose each other to diverse viewpoints. Furthermore, the research of Saud, (2020) and the results of this research article make a sense that there is a point to a potential threshold where excessively high levels of bridging social capital may have a less effecting role in promoting political civic engagement until that bridging networking specifically provide the opportunity to discuss political issues and give them political awareness.

The findings of this research study align with prior literature, indicating that the interaction between bonding and bridging social capital significantly influences community-based civic engagement (Loflin, 2003). Specifically, the highest levels of community civic engagement were reported by respondents who possessed a combination of strong bonding and bridging social capital. This suggests that the interplay between these two forms of social capital may foster a sense of connection to one's in-group as well as an outward-looking orientation, which collectively corresponds to greater civic participation at the community level. In contrast, in this research article the interaction between bonding and bridging social capital was not found to be statistically significant for political civic engagement (Loflin, 2003). While both bonding and bridging social capital were individually important for political participation, their interaction did not exert a significant effect. This implies that the impact of bonding social capital on political engagement is not dependent on the level of bridging social capital, and vice versa. This finding suggests that bonding and bridging social capital may operate through distinct pathways to influence political participation.

7. Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the complex interplay of social capital, demographic factors, and civic engagement among Pakistani university students. Our findings underscore the importance of fostering both strong social bonds and diverse networks to promote both community and political civic engagement. By understanding the distinct pathways through which different types of social capital contribute to civic engagement, we can develop more effective interventions to cultivate active and engaged citizens. The distinct and combined influences of these forms of social capital, alongside demographic factors, we can develop more effective strategies to empower young people to become active and engaged citizens.

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