

Social Capital and Perceived Constraints

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Abstract: *The author examined the experiences of social capital and perceived constraints across genders, ecologies, and multiple life span development stages in the Indian context. Along with this, the study explored the relationship between social capital and perceived constraints. 360 males and females, ranging from 15 to 65 years ($M=33.50$, $SD=11.99$) belonging to two ecological settings i. e., rural India and urban India completed Social Capital Scale comprising of four subscales as Social Equality Scale (developed by the authors), Social Reputation Scale (developed by the present researchers), Social Support Scale (Mehra & Kulhara, 1997) and Interpersonal Relationship Scale (developed by the present researchers); Perceived Constraints Scale (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978) and responded to demographic questions. The comparisons of the group across gender, ecology, and developmental stages are undertaken in this study did point out ample influence on the measures of social capital and perceived constraints. They evinced that how people visualize social capital and perceive constraints may vary according to the context to which they belong. In conclusion, the age, gender, and ecological setting of a person affect social capital and perceived constraints. Correlational analysis showed a mixed pattern of relationship between the factors of social capital and perceived constraints. It may be noted that the formation, as well as the perception of social capital and perceived constraints, takes place in the specific socio-cultural context. There was an uneven distribution of social capital across different socio-cultural characteristics. However, it was difficult to separate the causal processes involved; therefore, more studies of the causal effects of socio-cultural characteristics on social capital accumulation and the experience of perceived constraints are recommended.*

Keywords: Social Capital, Perceived Constraints, Social Equality, Social Reputation, Interpersonal Relationship

1. Introduction

Social structure and cultural factors influence individual behavior (Pettigrew, 1997). In a country like India, the broad contexts, such as gender, developmental stage, and ecology, are critical factors where people embody momentous disproportions and variations in their lived experiences. For example, the life of villages or rural India differs in multiple ways from the life in towns. Within sociology, there is a long and distinguished tradition of research on rural-urban differences (Adair-Toteff, 1995; Nelson, 1952) whereas, within psychology, there has been little attempt to determine how and to what extent rural youth differ from their urban and suburban counterparts (Crockett, Shanahan & Jackson-Newsom, 2000). According to the ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), differences would be expected, because rural regions differ from urban cosmopolitan settings in important ways, providing diverse milieus for progress. The patriarchic norms are still regulating and guiding the pattern of behavior of males and females. It is common that boys are encouraged to be aggressive and self-reliant and to show fortitude and that girls are encouraged to be industrious, responsible, obedient, and sexually restrained across the culture (Barry, Josephson, Lauer & Marshall, 1976).

Developmental processes and social influence are closely linked to each other; that is, gender development cannot be adequately studied without considering social processes; analogously, the social-psychological analysis of gender must not be restricted to a particular age group (i. e., young adults) (Eckes & Trautner, 2000). In India, the life stages are also being organized in a different way under various kinds of advances in technology, media, educational system, and opportunity structure. It was found that the social capital accumulation along the life cycle is different for men and women, with men accumulating more social capital at all ages, with a different peak and overall profile (Addis &

Joxhe, 2016). Unger (1979) pointed out that gender differences in behavior that are revealed by empirical observation are generally of lesser magnitude than what people believe to be the case.

1.1 Social capital and its associates

Social capital has been proven to provide benefits to both individuals and whole communities concerning various outcomes including health and well-being (Moore & Kawachi, 2017). This notion is a widely-used sociological construct to capture the value of our social relationships (Lin & Erickson, 2008). Social capital is also perceived as a resource that is available for the whole population of a particular society or community (Kawachi & Subramanian, 2018). However, it is not a new concept, having existed as an idea in the work of Émile Durkheim and Max Weber, among others (Portes, 1998; Farr, 2004). Coleman (1988, 1990) further developed the idea of social capital and used it in combination with the concepts of physical and human capital, depicting clear differences among them. He defined social capital as "a property shared by most forms of social capital that differentiate it from other forms of capital is its public goods aspect: the actor or actors who generate social capital ordinarily capture only a small part of its benefits, a fact that leads to underinvestment in social capital". Social capital improves the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions (Putnam, 1993).

Several studies revealed a positive relationship of social capital with health, quality of life, coping, self-esteem, altruistic behavior, life satisfaction, health benefits, social well-being, emotional well-being, psychological well-being, positive aging, social participation (Wahl, Bergland & Løyland, 2010; Poortinga, 2006; Mohnen, Völker, Flap & Groenewegen, 2012; Simons et. al, 2019; Engbers, Thompson & Slaper, 2017; Hooghe & Vanhoutte, 2011). Though, there are numerous positive effects of social

capital. However, there is no guarantee that it will produce only positive results (Coffe&Geys 2006). Adler & Kwon (2002) pointed out the positive and negative aspects of social capital. Research has also shown that people with extensive social connections linking them to people with diverse resources tend to be better employed and housed, and happier (Imandoust 2011).

Numerous researchers have delved into gender differences regarding the experiences of social capital and wellbeing (Klyver & Terjesen, 2007; Renzulli, Aldrich & Moody, 2000; Robinson & Stubberud, 2011). Women are less likely to rely on their networks for job searches, business development, and promotions since their networks consist of more kin and close neighbors rather than business associates (Lin, 2000; Molyneux, 2002) whereas men can receive benefits such as business information and resources from larger, male-dominated networks. Women's child care and housekeeping responsibilities imposed by gender-segregated roles place women in a limited boundary of social networks comprised of family and kin (Dhaliwal, 2010; Kim, 2012). However, men still can have greater access to social capital and reap more benefits from it (Parks-Yancy, DiTomaso & Post, 2006). Though men are more likely than women to have social networks based primarily in the workplace, they may experience network reduction in the transition to retirement (Fischer & Oliner, 1983).

A mixed pattern of results was observed about the relationship between social capital and multiple life span development stages (Denton, Prus, & Walters, 2004; Gallicchio, Hoffman & Helzlsouer, 2007; Krause, Handifield & Tyler, 2007; Lee et al. 2008; McDonald & Mair, 2010). Few studies concluded that in general social capital accumulates with age (Bridges & Villemez, 1986) whereas others offer a reverse observation that social capital tends to decline with age (Coleman, 1990; Kalmijn, 2003). Some researchers indicate both accumulations as well as decline (Erickson, 2003). Nevertheless, lesser is known about life-course patterns of social capital—that is, resources embedded within social relationships (Lin, 2001). At a younger age, friendships are formed quickly and easily (Cairns & Leung, 1995). According to the Socio-emotional selectivity theory old aged persons who have gathered knowledge and information over the life-course are less likely to engage in social interaction for the sake of information sharing as they age (Carstensen, 1995). Besides the overall decline in contacts across the life course, older people tend to experience increases in neighborhood socializing, religious attendance, and volunteering from age 57 to 85 (Cornwell, Edward, & Schumm, 2008).

More or less people readily make use of the rural-urban distinction to characterize places and persons (Jacob & Luloff, 1995). Various studies have demonstrated that the attitudes, beliefs, and values of rural residents are generally traditional and conservative (Fischer, 1975; Nelsen & Yokley, 1970; Schnaiberg, 1970) and they are more religious than urban residents and hold more conservative religious beliefs (McCartin & Freehill, 1986; Meystedt, 1984). Many researchers sought to explore psychological variables in the background of the rural-urban dichotomy. This study held the same view that different ecological

settings matter in an individual's socio-emotional experiences. Therefore, the authors attempted to observe the experiences of social capital and perceived constraints across urban and rural India.

1.2 Perceived Constraints

Another variable undertaken in this study was perceived constraints. It refers to the extent one believes there are obstacles or factors beyond one's control that interfere with reaching goals. Jackson (1991) described perceived constraints as “factors perceived by individuals to inhibit or prohibit participation and enjoyment in leisure”. The experience of constraints is related to a “hierarchy of social privilege” and that “social class may have a more powerful influence on leisure participation and non-participation than the analysis of socioeconomic variation in recreational activities has typically demonstrated” (Crawford, Jackson & Godbey, 1991). Constraints can also be complex, including, for instance, the intentional or ambivalent diversion of recreation services away from a particular group due to oppressive policies or, conversely, the lack of supportive policies (Parsons et al., 2015). Some empirical studies have also suggested that social class and economic factors are powerful indicators of leisure participation, with disadvantaged women (low income, unemployed, single parents, etc.) being more likely than other social groups to experience constraints to participation (Shaw, 1994). Social contributions might depend on factors such as gender, life stage, health status, and socioeconomic status (Hodgkin 2011; Li, Savage & Warde, 2008).

Socioeconomic factors have been widely recognized as important determinants of social outcomes (Tobias, Blakely, Matheson, Rasanathan, & Atkinson, 2009; Carroll, Cohen, & Marsland, 2011). In a study, it was observed that in late midlife, people today perceive fewer constraints than did same-aged peers 20 years ago. These secular trends remained after covarying for individual and cohort differences in physical health, performance-based measures of cognitive functioning (memory), quantitative and qualitative indicators of social support, and self-esteem. It was observed that the perceptions of constraints in people's lives generalize to key psychosocial resources across adulthood and old age (Drewelies, Deeg, Huisman & Gerstorf, 2018).

1.3 The Present Study

This study, therefore, sought to explore the differences between urban and rural regions as regards to experiences of social capital (in terms of social equality, social reputation, social support, and interpersonal relationship) and perceived constraints based on genders across the adolescence, young adulthood, and middle adulthood. In particular, this study attended to two key questions: First, how do people from multiple life span developmental stages, residential settings/ecologies, and genders observe social capital and systemic constraints? How does the perception of social capital relate to systemic constraints?

Based on available research it was proposed that the experiences of social capital and perceived constraints can

be the function of multiple personal and contextual factors. The contextual factors considered in this work included ecology or residential setting, gender, and developmental stage. It was proposed to include two residential settings namely rural and urban. It may be noted that the development of any region is gradually treated in terms of urbanization. The rural areas are trying to catch the spirit of urban life. The technology is narrowing the gap between the two and rural areas are changing very fast. They are moving toward urban centers as their goal which has become standards of development. The gap between the two is being reduced since many of the urban facilities and practices are reaching remote areas. Keeping this in view it was considered reasonable to have two extreme settings. To this end, it was opted to undertake the study in the urban setting of Delhi, the capital of India, and Gorakhpur in eastern Uttar Pradesh which represents a relatively undeveloped region. The rural /urban distinction is not merely a difference in labels. It involves the difference in the pace of life, time orientation, and engagement in various activities. Thus a rural residential setting has a slow pace of life, relatively greater emphasis on past and present orientation, and engagement in the limited number of activities for a longer period. Contrarily, the urban and metro setting presents an impersonal setting, emphasis on the present and future orientation and multi-tasking and short-term engagement with various tasks needing coordination.

Gender is a key variable that organizes social and personal lives by defining the roles, responsibilities, and obligations. It is a personal as well as contextual variable. As a personal variable, it refers to the meaning and experience of being a person of a particular gender. As a contextual variable, it stands for the resources and liabilities that are explicitly and implicitly get associated with gender identity. Depending upon the family structure (e. g. nuclear vs. joint) the life course, opportunities, facilitators, and obstacles in the path of progress are determined. In contemporary India, women are often exploited, discriminated against, and deprived of various opportunities that are easily accessible to men. The life experiences of women and men tend to develop diverse mindsets, expectations, and coping strategies. Given these considerations, it was expected that the male and female participants would differ in the variables under investigation and the pattern of difference will depend upon the residential setting. This would lead to greater gender differences in rural than urban settings.

The third contextual variable was the developmental stage. It is an important marker of the life experiences and capacities enjoyed by a person. In that sense, it is a personal or organismic variable. However, it is also a contextual variable in the sense that not only the physical environment of an individual is organized according to the developmental stage but also the expectations, responsibilities, and tasks to depend upon it. In this study, three developmental stages were planned to be included i. e. adolescence, young adulthood, and middle adulthood. Life span development theories designate diverse varieties of conflicts and challenges related to these phases. Erikson (1963) has expressed dissimilar types of conflicts, the determination of which is preserved as important for psychological advancement preparing for the next phase.

The key psychological variables included in the study are Social Capital (i. e. Social Reputation, Social support, Social Equality, Interpersonal relationships) and Perceived Constraints. The study was correlational but it was guided by certain conceptual assumptions and that helped to make some predictions about associations between variables under study. Keeping this the following objectives were proposed.

Objectives

- 1) To investigate the role of ecology, developmental stage, and gender in determining the understandings of participants relating to social capital and perceived constraints.
- 2) To inspect the nature of relationships among the social capital and perceived constraints.

Hypotheses

- H1 The degree of social capital and perceived constraints would evince significant differences between the rural and urban ecological settings.
- H2 The male and female participants would differ in the extent of social capital and perceived constraints.
- H3 The magnitude of social capital and perceived constraints would evince significant developmental changes leading to differences among the adolescence, young adult, and middle adult participants.
- H4 Social capital would be significantly correlated to perceived constraints.

2. Method

2.1 Sample and procedure

360 males and females, ranging from 15 to 65 years ($M=33.50$, $SD=11.99$) belonging to two ecological settings i. e., rural India and urban India participated in the study. They were equally and randomly drawn from two-cultural settings: Gorakhpur Region and National Capital Region of Delhi. The contributors were contacted independently. The measures along with demographic details were done by the participants and in case of difficulty in understanding the same was explained. The study entailed a 2x2x3, Ecological Setting (Urban and Rural) x Gender (Male and Female) x Developmental Stage (Adolescence, Young Adult and Middle Adult) between group model factorial design.

2.2 Measures of interest

Social Capital: It is comprised of four components as described below.

(i) *Social Equality*. The Social Equality Scale (developed by the present researchers) assesses one's level of being socially equal in terms of rights, positions, and opportunities. It consisted of 6 statements with 5-point rating scales, ranging from "very true" (1) to "very untrue" (5). The coefficient alpha value of the measure was found to be .61. The measure was intended to tap the one's felt social equality in terms of rights, positions, and opportunities. An example of an item is "I get equal opportunity for my personal development similar to other members of the society".

(ii) *Social Reputation.* The Social Reputation Scale (developed by the present researchers) assesses one's level of striving for attaining, maintaining, and sustaining social reputation. It has consisted of 11 statements with 5-point rating scales, ranging from "very true" (1) to "very untrue" (5). The coefficient alpha value of the measure was estimated at .81. The measure aimed to tap the level of one's endeavor for attaining, maintaining, and sustaining reputation at the societal level. An example of the items includes "I do help the needy to sustain my social reputation".

(iii) *Social Support.* The Social Support Scale (Mehra & Kulhara, 1997) measure the level of received social support under difficult circumstances. It consisted of 19 items with 4-point rating scales, ranging from "not at all" (1) to "extremely" (4). The items were related to the emotional/support one gets when one faces unwanted circumstances. An example of the item is "People often go out of the way to help me".

(iv) *Interpersonal Relationship.* The Interpersonal Relationship Scale (developed by the present researchers) assesses the level of one's judgment about the interpersonal relationship. The measure consisted of 8 statements with 5-point rating scales, ranging from "very true" (1) to "very untrue" (5). The coefficient alpha value of the measure was

found to be .68. The measure aims at evaluating one's level of interpersonal relationships. An example of the items includes "I do trust the members of my group".

Perceived Constraints: The Perceived Constraints Scale (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978) was administered to assess the extent of perceived constraints by using 8 items on 5-point scales ranging from "very true" (1) to "very untrue" (5). The coefficient alpha value of the measure was found to be .84. The measure attempts to check the level of perceived constraints encountered in one's life. An example of the items includes "Other people determine most of what I can and cannot do," "There is little I can do to change many of the important things in my life," "I often feel helpless in dealing with the problems of life," and "What happens in my life is often beyond my control."

3. Results

The obtained scores on the aspects of social capital and perceived constraints were executed to separate ANOVA to observe the effects of life span development stages, genders, and ecological settings (see Table 1). Correlations between components of social capital and perceived constraints were considered (see Table 2).

Table 1: Mean Scores on the Components of Social Capital and Perceived Constraints as the Function of the Main Effects of Ecological Setting, Gender and Developmental Stage.

	Ecological Setting			Gender			Developmental Stage			
	Rural	Urban	F (1, 350)	Male	Female	F (1, 350)	Adolescence	Young Adult	Middle Adult	F (2, 350)
Social Equality	19.84	22.36	42.32***	21.91	20.30	17.22***	20.54	21.00	21.76	3.35*
Social Reputation	25.59	27.54	11.22***	27.00	26.54	.008	27.63	25.94	26.13	3.36*
Social support	53.21	50.98	9.01**	50.04	54.15	30.67***	49.23	52.45	54.60	17.68***
Interpersonal Relationship	31.13	26.72	96.36***	30.62	27.23	56.97***	29.88	29.36	27.52	10.15***
Perceived Constraints	24.68	23.43	5.41*	22.77	25.34	22.61***	23.04	24.01	25.11	4.92*

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

It was found that the participants from the urban region expressed greater social equality, social reputation, and a lesser degree of social support and interpersonal relationship than their counterparts from the rural region. Regarding gender, it was noted that the males showed a greater degree of social equality, social reputation, and interpersonal relationship than females whereas females reported a greater degree of social support than males. Concerning the developmental stage, it was found that the middle adult group showed greater social equality and social support than the young adult and adolescent groups. The adolescents reported greater social reputation and interpersonal relationships than their older counterparts from young adult and middle adult groups.

The above main effects were qualified by several interactions. It was found that gender x developmental stage interaction was significant for social equality, $F(2, 350) = 3.81, p < .05$. Figure 1 shows that social equality was greater in the older males in young adult and middle adult groups than their female counterparts whereas adolescents showed the almost same level of social equality in boys as well as girls.

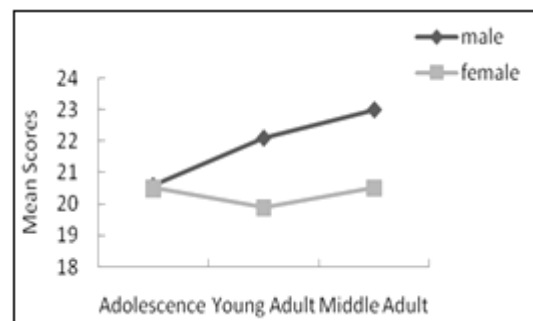


Figure 1: Mean social equality scores by gender x developmental stage interaction.

Ecological setting x developmental stage interaction was reached significance for social support, $F(2, 350) = 3.96, p < .05$. Figure 2 shows that the level of social support was greater in rural adolescents and young adults than their counterparts from the urban region whereas urban middle adults reported a slightly higher level of social support than their counterparts from the rural region.

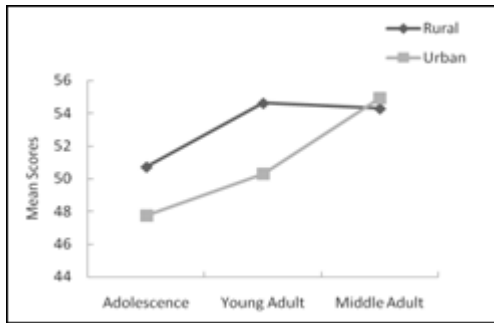


Figure 2: Mean social support scores by ecological settings x developmental stage interaction

The data also yielded a gender x ecological setting x developmental stage interaction for social support, $F(2, 350) = 6.30, p < .01$.

Figure 3 shows that rural adolescent, young adult, and middle adult participants exhibited a higher degree of social support than the rural male adolescent, young adult, and middle adult participants, respectively. However, the difference in social support between rural male middle adult and rural female middle adult participants was relatively greater in comparison to the difference in other groups. Figure 3 indicates that in the urban region female participants reported a greater degree of social support than the urban male adolescents and young adults. In the middle adulthood stage, the gender difference was absent in the urban setting but in the rural setting, females scored significantly greater than males.

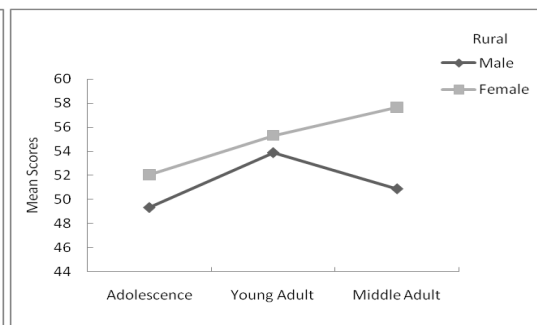
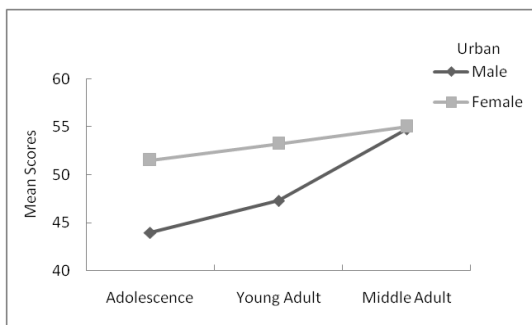


Figure 3: Mean social support scores by gender x ecological setting x developmental stage interaction.

The scores for interpersonal relationships also yielded a significant gender x ecological setting x developmental stage interaction, $F(2, 350) = 3.67, p < .05$. Figure 4 indicates that rural male adolescents and middle adults displayed greater interpersonal relationships than rural females. However, the gender difference during middle adulthood was not

significant. In the urban setting, the pattern was slightly different as the male participants exhibited greater interpersonal relationships than their female counterparts in all the three groups, except the group of adolescents where the difference was not significant.

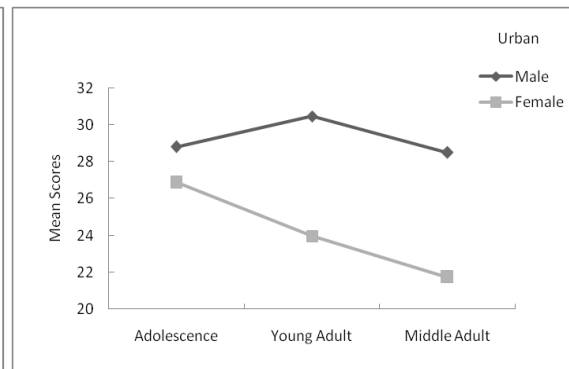
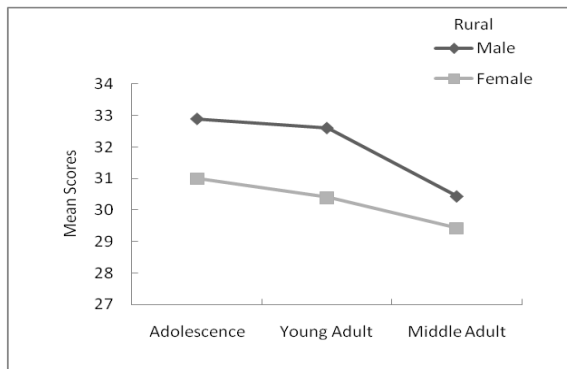


Figure 4: Mean interpersonal relationship scores by gender x ecological setting x developmental stage interaction.

As per perceived constraints, it was found that the rural participants perceived more constraints ($M=24.68$) than their urban counterparts ($M=23.43$), $F(1, 350) = 5.41, p < .05$. It was also noted that female participants reported greater perceived constraints ($M=25.34$) than their male counterparts ($M=22.77$), $F(1, 350) = 22.61, p < .001$. The middle adult participants had reported greater perceived constraints ($M=25.11$) than the young adult ($M=24.01$) and adolescent ($M=23.04$) participants, $F(2, 350) = 4.92, p < .01$.

greater level of constraints than their urban counterparts whereas urban females exhibited a slightly higher level of constraints than rural females.

Gender x ecological setting interaction was statistically significant for perceived systemic constraints, $F(1, 350) = 11.85, p < .001$. Figure 5 shows that rural males reported a

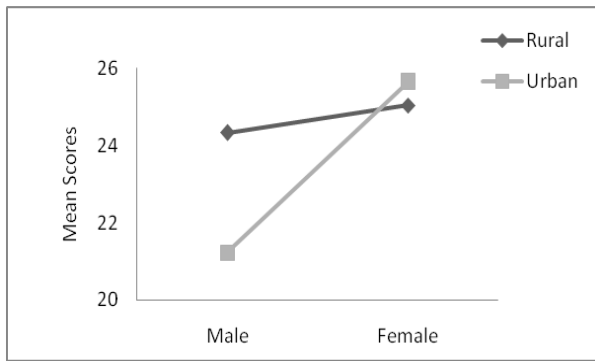


Figure 5: Mean systemic constraints scores by gender x ecological setting interaction

Table 2: Interrelationship among various dimensions of social capital and perceived constraints

Social Equality	1				
Social Reputation	-.107*	1			
Social Support	.044	-.205**	1		
Interpersonal Relationship	-.100	-.039	-.140**	1	
Perceived Constraints	-.148**	.024	.107*	-.102	1

***p<.001, ** p<.01, *p<.05

Table 2 shows a mixed pattern of relationship between the factors of social capital and perceived constraints. Social equality, a factor of social capital, shared a negative correlation with perceived constraints ($r=-.148$, $p<.01$) whereas social support, a factor of social capital, displayed a positive correlation with perceived constraints ($r=.107$, $p<.05$). Interpersonal relationships and social reputation, factors of social capital, had no significant relationship with perceived constraints.

4. Discussion

An important predictor of social capital and its related processes is community type, especially the differences between rural and urban communities (Beaudion & Thorson, 2004). In this study, social capital was used as a combination of one’s perceived social support, social equality, social reputation, and interpersonal relationship. The results demonstrated that social equality and social reputation were greater among the urban participants whereas social support and interpersonal relationship were higher among the rural participants. As we know the two-thirds population of India is still rural and there prevails a wide gap between rural and urban settings in terms of infrastructure development, availability of employment, the opportunity for higher studies, and basic civic amenities. Since policy implementation and development is following a top-down pattern which often favors the urban areas. Consequent to this, a kind of perceived difference at the level of social equality between rural and urban regions can be observed in this study. In the context of development toward a knowledge-based economy, this social equality is especially crucial and the lesser disposition of it in rural areas ends up concentrating innovation processes in urban areas. As a consequence, the marginalization of rural areas increases (Li, Westlund & Liu, 2019). The era of liberalization, privatization, and globalization has accentuated the gulf between rural and urban regions. The throat-cut competition has made people only self-centered and diminished the

cohesiveness and interdependent way of life. The emergence of a market-driven society also promoted materialistic reward structures and the urban people are motivated by such strivings.

In relative terms, the rural setting still observes the values of collectiveness, cooperativeness, association, interdependence to a greater extent. In classical sociology, rural communities have been described as a network of close personal ties that significantly influenced all dimensions of personal life. These relationships usually gave strong social support, but in some way may limit mobility (Tobiasz-Adamczyk & Zawisza, 2017). This is why the rural people perceived more social support and interpersonal relationship than their counterparts from the urban region. The findings of lower social support and interpersonal relationship in urban residents are sustained by few studies that have confirmed less social support among urban inhabitants (Kim, Stewart, Shin, Yoon & Lee, 2004; Stickley, Koyanagi, Roberts & McKee, 2015; Paykel, Abbott, Jenkins, Brugh & Meltzer, 2003; Adjaye-Gbewonyo, Rebok, Gross, Gallo & Underwood, 2019), a better probability of living unaccompanied as well as lesser levels of social trust at the ecological level (Yiengprugsawan, Caldwell, Lim, Seubsman, Sleigh, 2011).

In the case of gender differences, the results showed greater social equality, social reputation, and interpersonal relationship among male participants and higher social support among the female participants. This result could be attributed to the prevalent cognitive bias against women in Indian society. It appears that women are not trusted as much as men are, either by men or by other women. Women are not trusted to be able to perform the way that they can perform, at least in the public sphere. (Addis & Joxhe, 2016). Indian society is still male-dominated. During the post-independence era attempts have been made to bridge the gap between the two genders but deep-rooted practices and rituals take time. Several women empowerment policies and schemes have been planned and executed by the Indian government but the deep-rooted biases prevail in people’s daily conduct. The distribution and control over physical and human resources are in favor of males and that is why the males reported a higher level of social equality and social reputation. The results also indicated that females exhibited a higher level of support than males. They are consistent with earlier findings that women exhibit more cooperative behavior than men due to greater interdependency and altruism (Folbre, 1994; White, 1992). It may be due to the divergent roles assigned to females in Indian society. Previous studies have summarized that women often depend more on informal relations and so form stronger kinship and friendship relations than men, who tend to rely more on formal relationships (Molyneux, 2002; More, 1990; Riddell, Wilson, & Baron, 2001).

The results about developmental changes revealed greater social equality and social support during the middle adulthood phase of life and stronger social reputation and interpersonal relationships during adolescence. Several social support pieces of research have observed age variation in social capital (e. g., Cornwell et al., 2008; Kalmijn, 2003). Social support networks are one feature of social capital

(Putnam, 2000). It may be noted that the existing studies are ambiguous on developmental changes in social capital. While some suggest that social capital accumulates with age (Bridges & Villemez, 1986), others show the view that it tends to depreciate with age (Coleman, 1990; Kalmijn, 2003; Wellman, Yuk-lin Wong, Tindall & Nazer, 1997), and others suggest a mixed trend in which accumulation and decline both are noted (Erickson, 2003; Lambert, Hogan, Camp & Ventura, 2006).

The main effects, however, were qualified by some interactions. The interaction of gender and developmental stage showed greater social equality among males in young adult and middle adult stages than their female counterparts and a similar level of social equality among adolescent boys and girls. This implies gender differentiation with advancing age. At a younger age, friendships are often formed quickly and easily (Cairns & Leung, 1995). There was also a significant ecological setting x developmental stage interaction displayed greater social support among rural adolescents and young adults than their counterparts from urban regions whereas a slightly higher level of social support among urban middle adult participants than their counterparts from the rural region. The higher social support among rural adolescents and young adults indicates the prevalence of cooperative, supportive, collective, and interdependent practices that figure in the lifestyle observed in rural society. One interesting finding was that urban middle adulthood showed higher social support than their counterparts from a rural region. This finding seems to reflect the role of adults as the main bread earner and regulator of family activities.

The results also showed higher-order interaction for social support. It was found that rural participants exhibited a higher degree of social support than rural participants. However, the difference in the level of social support was greater during the middle adulthood life stage in comparison to the other two stages. It may be due to the change of roles among the rural male and female middle adult participants. In the middle stage, there is a transition for rural adult males and females. Bowling (2011) found that compared to those under the age of 65, those over the age of 65 reported having significantly fewer people to turn to for comfort and support in a time of crisis and significantly fewer people available for practical support. Rural males are still retaining the status of the head of the family and females are not the main decision-maker and this makes them feel to have a lesser degree of social support. It was also noted that in the urban region female participants showed higher social support than the urban males. In the middle adulthood stage, the gender difference was absent in the urban setting but in the rural setting, females showed significantly higher support than males. The findings somehow indicate that the culture of sharing, collectiveness, association, and interdependence is still part of mainstream rural life. It also has feminine nature and mostly belongs to a female. Gender, ecological setting, and developmental stage interaction demonstrated greater interpersonal relationships in rural male adolescents and middle adults than rural females. Due to the different roles of rural males and females across the developmental stages, they report the different degrees of perceived interpersonal relationships. However, the gender difference during middle

adulthood was not significant. In the urban setting, the pattern was slightly different. The male participants revealed a higher degree of the interpersonal relationship than their female counterparts in all the three groups, except the group of adolescents where the difference was not significant. The greater exposure to new changes in society as well as functioning mainly outside the home, urban males get more opportunities to interact with other people. It may be one of the reasons to have a greater interpersonal relationship among urban males than urban females.

Perceived constraints indicate the extent one believes there are obstacles or factors beyond one's control that interfere with reaching the chosen goals. The results showed greater perceived constraints among rural participants than their urban counterparts. The limited opportunities and inadequate economic resources prevailing in villages create many constraints. The constraints are mainly in terms of inappropriate infrastructural development, lack of basic amenities, lack of social awareness among people about their rights, economic inequality, and caste and class-related prejudices. Rural areas have observed large losses of the young, educated, and skilled (Lichter, McLaughlin, & Cornwell, 1995), raising the specter of increasing concentrations of poverty in some rural areas (Fitchen, 1995; Lichter, Cornwell & Eggebeen, 1993; Swaim, 1995).

As expected the female participants reported greater perceived constraints than their male counterparts. The gender stereotypes and biases may work as major factors for greater perceived constraints among females than males. According to Addis and Joxhe (2016), researches on gender summarized the existence of an asymmetry, where a man is perceived or believed to be of higher value than a woman and as a consequence, assume a dominant position, in terms of power and access to material and symbolic resources. Middle adulthood emerged to be a phase of high perceived constraints than the other two groups. It implies that they are less optimistic and face many constraints and stresses. This finding confirms some previous studies in which older populations (60 and older) displayed decreased social capital and a diminished sense of well-being (Biddle, 2012, Keating, Swindle, & Foster, 2005) and experiences of loneliness (Nyqvist, Viktor, Forsman & Cattani, 2016; Santini et al., 2016) The interaction of gender and ecological setting showed higher perceived constraint among rural than urban males and a slightly higher level of perceived constraints among urban than rural females. These findings point to uneven opportunities and status for people in different regions.

The correlational findings exhibited a mixed pattern of relationship between the factors of social capital and perceived constraints. Social equality, the factor of social capital, shared a negative correlation with perceived constraints. The experience of constraints is related to a "hierarchy of social privilege" and that "social class may have a more powerful influence on leisure participation and non-participation" (Crawford, Jackson & Godbey, 1991). Social support, the factor of social capital, displayed an interesting positive correlation with perceived constraints. In general, it could be expected that social support should show a negative correlation with perceived constraints. However,

it is not so in this study. The explanation for the same could be attributed to prevalent systemic and structural constraints across the country and collective cultural traits of the eastern world.

5. Concluding Remarks

The findings of the present study suggest some relevance for Indian socio-cultural contexts. They hint that to augment social capital and mitigate perceived constraints in the Indian context, we need to diminish the degrees of disparities across genders, ecologies, and multiple developmental stages. It may be noted that the formation, as well as the perception of social capital and perceived constraints, takes place in the specific socio-cultural context. The comparisons of the group across gender, ecology, and developmental stages are undertaken in this study did point out ample influence on the measures of social capital and perceived constraints. They evinced that how people visualize social capital and perceive constraints may vary according to the context to which they belong.

In conclusion, the age, gender, and ecological setting of a person affect social capital and perceived constraints. It is now hypothesized that the younger generation is in the process of change and meeting new people constantly, while the older age groups live a more steady and routine life, which would explain the differences in social capital (Kapucu, 2011). The correlational analysis suggests that the different aspects of social capital engage separately with perceived constraints. However, it could be over generalized that the context in which people live exerts a major influence on social capital and perceived constraints. This is very much true, particularly, in the case of developing countries like India where there is a clear divide concerning gender, age, ecological settings, and socio-economic status.

6. Future Implications and Directions

The inferences of the research findings are complex, given that how people visualize social capital and perceive constraints may vary according to the context to which they belong and the relationship between social capital and perceived constraints was not found to be linear. The interplay of genders, developmental stages, and ecologies serves as a useful frame for analysis intended to explore the experiences of social capital and perceived constraints in the Indian context and may contribute to a more basic understanding of adolescents, youth, elderly, ecological context, and the life course. This study also provides small empirical evidence related to experiences of social capital and perceived constraints across genders, ecologies, and developmental stages with discussions for future research and implications for civic engagements, community feeling, and social welfare. There was an uneven distribution of social capital across different socio-cultural characteristics. However, it was difficult to separate the causal processes involved; therefore, more studies of the causal effects of socio-cultural characteristics on social capital accumulation and the experience of perceived constraints are recommended. Furthermore, the social needs and potential barriers for less empowered rural women deserve particular attention from the practitioners of social interventions aiming

to promote social capital and mitigate perceived systemic and structural constraints from rural lives. Future research may be commenced in the path of developing approaches to nurture social capital and alleviate perceived constraints so that we may lead to a significant and peaceful human world.

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