An Exploratory Study on Bonding and Bridging Social Capital Among the Non-Displaced Kashmiri Pandits in Kashmir, India

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Abstract

In this exploratory study, we investigate two forms of social capital, bonding and bridging social capital among the non-displaced Kashmiri Pandits in Kashmir, India. In addition, we attempt to understand how displacement impinged the bonding and bridging social capital of non-displaced Kashmiri Pandits. The study uses a qualitative and ethnographic research design to elicit information from the participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 non-displaced Kashmiri Pandits in Kashmir, comprising 19 men and 11 women. The study concludes that the bonding social capital of non-displaced Kashmiri Pandits is plagued by a lack of interconnectedness caused by physical distance. In addition, the bridging social capital is restricted to a few Muslim neighbors and friends whom non-displaced Kashmiri Pandits have known for generations. The research findings suggest that if the bridging social capital of the non-displaced Kashmiri Pandit community is extended to the majority of the Kashmiri Muslim community, it will integrate both communities at large.

Keywords

Conflict; displacement; non-displaced Kashmiri pandits; social capital

Introduction

Over the last 30 years, Kashmir (currently recognized as a Union Territory), the northernmost frontier of India in the (erstwhile) state of Jammu and Kashmir has been facing militant insurgencies, religious conflict, and separatist propaganda leading to the displacement of the local Kashmiri population—Sikhs, Hindus including the Kashmiri Pandit/Kashmiri Pandits (KP/KPs), and Kashmiri Muslims (KM). The political instability and rigging of the state assembly election in 1987 in Kashmir alienated KM from the electoral process, which later led to calls from groups like the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) for secession from the Indian State (Ganguly, 1996). In addition, an open-armed conflict since 1988 between the government of India and JKLF for the liberation of Kashmir from India, followed by systematic violence like threats, rape, and selective killings of KPs, resulted in the expulsion of approximately 62,851 KP families by July-end in the 1990s (Kumar, 1996). Violent conflict, increasing lack of trust between KP and KM, and displacement have led to a decline in the sense of community, social networks, social relationships, and civic engagement at both intra and inter-community levels that has further contributed to a decline in the social capital for the individual and the community.

Prior studies in conflict zones conclude that conflict debilitates community bonds and plagues social relationships (Anderson & Wallace, 2012; Colletta & Cullen, 2000; Wood, 2008). In addition, individuals with robust social capital help them influence the decision-making process of whether to stay behind or flee (Adhikari, 2013). Therefore, individuals who are well connected to other community members get information about the threats and know the countermeasures available to the community members. The present study will shed light on a minority of the non-displaced KP population in the Kashmir region that decided to stay back in the conflict zone after the majority of KPs were forcibly displaced. The study of KPs who left during the conflict is insufficient, without understanding why some KPs stayed in the conflict zone. In essence, the social capital approach is appropriate to study this minority population as it will help us to find out how non-displaced KPs maintained their social relationships in Kashmir.

Social capital refers to individuals' social relationships while living in a society. It includes trust, social networks, norms, values, and shared beliefs. Social capital is essential to society as it contributes to social cohesion, networking, political engagement, and solving collective problems (Coleman, 1990; Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 1993). Conflict undermines the social fabric of society and divides the population by weakening communal group trust and norms of the society, resulting in communal strife (Colletta & Cullen, 2000). Research to understand the relationship between displacement and social capital supports the finding that social capital does not deplete when a society is engrossed in violent conflict; instead, new forms of social capital emerge due to conflict (Colletta & Cullen, 2000). However, there is a lack of research on understanding community bonds, social trust, and social networks or social capital within non-displaced communities in conflict-ridden zones.

The primary objective of this study is to understand community bonds, social networks, and social relations among the non-displaced KP population at the intra and inter-community levels for which there is a lack of data. The study is located in Kashmir, India, a zone of conflict after the 1990s communal crisis and the ensuing displacement of the KP community, leaving behind a small population of non-displaced KPs. The research explores the concept of social

capital, focusing on bonding and bridging social capital among the non-displaced KP community in Kashmir, as well as the conflict and mass displacement.

Overview of the Kashmiri Pandit exodus in 1989-1990

According to tradition, the KPs belong to the Hindu community and have inhabited Kashmir since the beginning of time (Kumar, 1996). With the spread of Islam into Kashmir followed by forced conversion and communal oppression by Muslim rulers from the 14th century onward, several mass exoduses of the KP population have occurred (Parmu, 1969), with the most recent in 1989–1990. While the exact number of KP families in Kashmir is unknown, and no government records indicate the number of displaced KPs, a number anywhere between 170,000–350,000 is often quoted (Evans, 2002). Numerous factors contributed to the forceful displacement of KPs from Kashmir. The KP land was taken and handed over to KMs without compensation through the institutionalization of land reforms, followed by a political delimitation commission that isolated KPs (Bhat, 2003). In addition, an open-armed conflict since 1988 between the government of India and the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) for the liberation of Kashmir from India (Santhanam & Sreedhar, 2003) followed by systematic violence like threats, rape, and selective killings of KPs by militants resulted in the expulsion of approximately 62,851 KP families by July-end in the 1990s (Kumar, 1996).

Although the displaced KP community believed the exile to be temporary, it has been a long-drawn experience (Datta, 2016). Sanjay Tickoo, general secretary of Kashmiri Pandit Sangarsh Samiti (KPSS), an organization that works for non-displaced KPs in Kashmir, says that even after the mass exodus in the 1990s, there was slight visibility of KPs in Kashmir. Approximately 5,000 KP families remained in the valley; however, after the Wadhama massacre in 1998, where 23 KPs were killed, many KP families left Kashmir (Sanjay Tickoo, July 17, 2021, Personal communication). Approximately 1,300 KP families stayed in Kashmir during the conflict due to economic constraints, attachment to their homeland, and the hope that the conflict may end soon (Trisal, 2007). As shown in Figure 1, the numbers significantly dropped to 808 families as of 2021 (Sanjay Tickoo, interview, July 17, 2021). In addition, recent killings of non-displaced KPs in Kashmir by terrorists led to the displacement of 10 more families from Shopian village of Kashmir, which dropped the number of non-displaced KP families in Kashmir to a mere 798 as of 2023 (Press Trust of India, 2022).

Figure 1: Decline of Kashmiri Pandit Families in Kashmir from 1990–2023
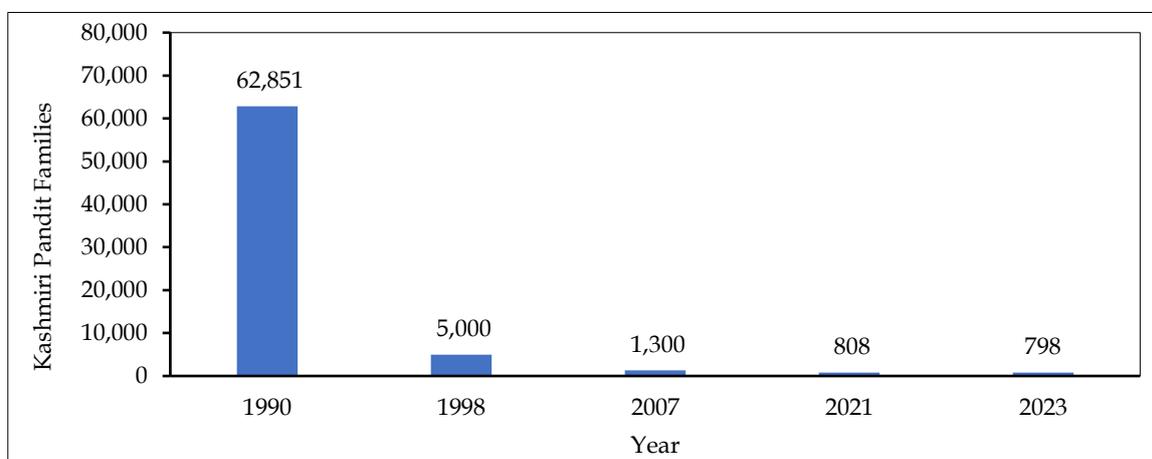
Note: The KP population has decreased over time. The Y-axis represents the number of families, and the X-axis represents time in years; the total number of families is presented on the bars.

Understanding displacement and social capital: A theoretical framework

Social capital is a multi-dimensional concept, and it is difficult to put forth within a singular definition. Over the century, it "has evolved into something of a cure-all for the maladies affecting society, applied to many events and in many different contexts as to lose any distinct meaning" (Portes, 1998, p. 2). Thus, while the scientific study of social capital is not new, the optimal utilization of the concept can be achieved when it is precisely defined and operationalized and its explanatory power is proven (Woolcock, 1998).

Social capital exists in social relationships (Robison & Siles, 2002). It emerges from the relationship with other individuals, and an individual can reap benefits from membership in social networks or social structures (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). Social capital is essential for understanding intra- and inter-group interaction, cooperation, and participation to satisfy social needs and improve living conditions. It is centered on positive outcomes of sociability. It is linked to broader discussions to show how these forms are vital sources of power and influence for solving societal conflict (Portes, 1998).

Furthermore, Putnam (2000) distinguished between bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding capital is exclusive and exists within homogeneous relationships sharing common identities. It focuses on the network aspect of social capital consisting of inward-looking ties that tend to strengthen exclusive identities. These ties encourage group trust and cooperative relations between similar people. Relationships with individuals based on trust create expectations and obligations, such as "I will help you today with the expectation that in the future, you will help me." This relationship emerges when the level of trust is high.

The bonding networks are dense. Participants readily monitor one another, known as network closure (Coleman, 1988). Communities held together by bonding social capital have generations of trust within the network and are mainly homogeneous groups (Putnam, 2000). These relationships correspond to solid ties and are often considered the building blocks for relationships with broader social networks (Granovetter, 1973). Bonding capital makes the flow of information readily available within the social structure as the relationships provide information channels. This is cardinal; when society is engrossed in violent conflict, and the relationships are debilitated, networks provide pivotal information regarding military movement and alert villagers about potential gunfights (Adhikari, 2013).

Bridging social capital is inclusive and refers to the heterogeneous relationships, perhaps by geographical location, religion, or age. Bridging capital is outward-looking and encompasses people across diverse social cleavages (Putnam, 2000). These ties are weak; however, they are cardinal for assessing resources and emotional support, which are not consistently available from primary ties (Torrejón & Martin-Matthews, 2022). For example, when the mass exodus of KPs occurred in the 1990s, non-displaced KPs developed heterogeneous ties at the micro-level with KM, leading to supportive relationships between the two communities. Another way of looking at these concepts is that bonding capital is good for getting by, and bridging capital is good for getting ahead (Putnam, 2000).

Several studies shed light on how bonding and bridging capital are essential for rebuilding societies affected by violent conflict (Colletta & Cullen, 2000; Collier et al., 2003). Further, bridging social capital is crucial in revitalizing neighborhoods and strengthening community

bonds through collective efforts from diverse ethnic backgrounds, while bonding social capital is essential when families require immediate support (Hawkins & Maurer, 2010).

A study by Varshney (2000) highlighted the link between conflict resolution and the levels of social capital within Hindu and Muslim communities in India. He distinguishes between intercommunal and intracommunal engagement, similar to the bridging and bonding of social capital. The study reveals that regular, face-to-face interactions between Hindus and Muslims in local organizations are vital in fostering mutual trust. These ties with diverse ethnic backgrounds create a sense of shared purpose, encouraging cooperation between communities that might otherwise be prone to division. Furthermore, Svendsen (2006), on bonding and bridging social capital, argued that excessive group bonding might harm individuals left out of the network. Such exclusivity can impose social and economic costs, fostering division and marginalization for outsiders. While bonding capital strengthens ties within a particular group, the lack of inclusive interactions with those outside the group can exacerbate social inequalities and hinder broader societal cohesion.

Figure 2: Themes of Bonding and Bridging Social Capital
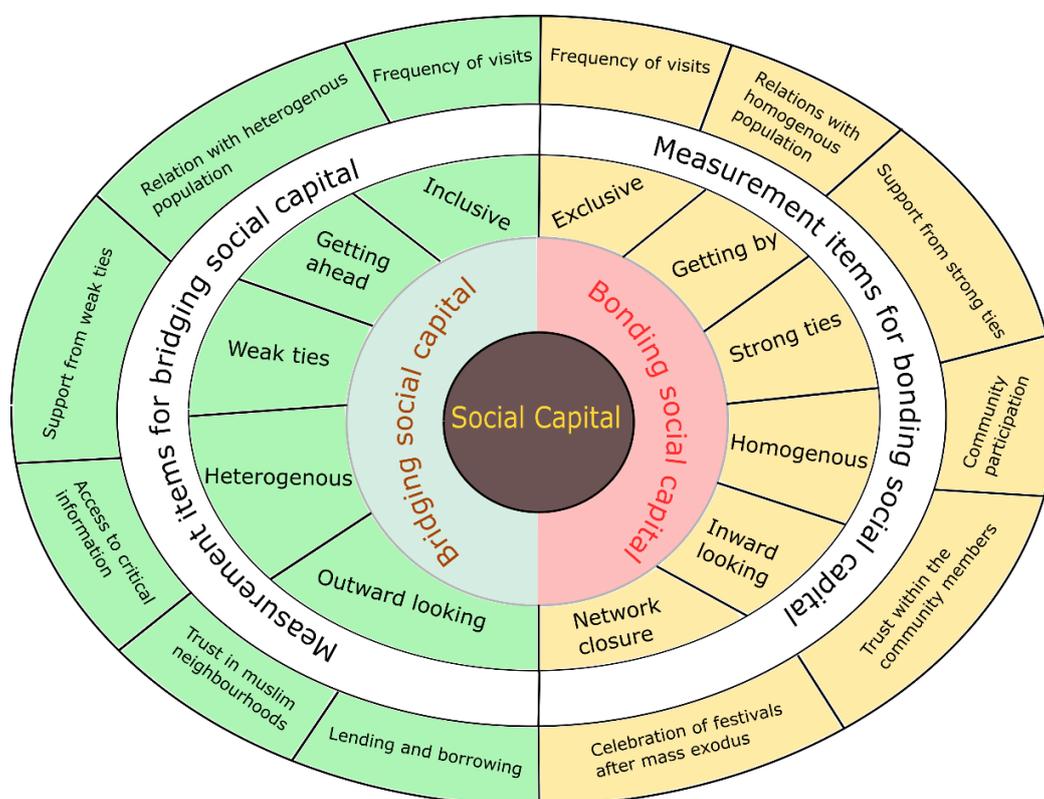
As shown in Figure 2, the aspects of bonding and bridging social capital are conceptualized from social capital theory (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000; Yang, 2007). The themes mentioned above identified to explore the presence of social capital are not randomly selected but are put forward by (Yang, 2007). Additionally, these variables are used in previous social capital surveys such as the British Household Panel Survey (Institute for Social and Economic Research [ISER], 2000), European Social Survey (ESS) (2002), and British Social Attitude Survey (National Centre for Social Research, 2000). In addition, during the pilot interviews with the research participants, subject areas such as community participation, celebration of festivals after mass exodus, lending and borrowing, and support from ties have been pivotal.

These have been identified as cardinal to the non-displaced KP population, as shared during the Pilot study. Furthermore, the study investigates how violent conflict and displacement affect the intra and inter-community relationships among the community members within a conflict-ridden region such as experienced in Kashmir. In essence, the present study at the micro-level aims to shed light on how non-displaced KP families and individuals maintain social capital in a region that is affected by violent conflict, community tensions, and mass displacement.

Moreover, there is a significant reason to conduct a micro-level study on social capital as the concept is mainly used to comprehend social processes at an aggregate level, for instance, community development, social inequality, and political participation (Svendsen, 2006). A micro-level study on social capital will explain how the individual processes social capital at the micro-level and further explain meso- and macro-level social processes (Headstrom & Swedberg, 1998). Therefore, this study will reveal the social processes of forming bonding/bridging social capital within a non-displaced community and its association with other communities within a conflict zone.

Methodology

The qualitative research design is informed by ethnography and grounded theory, crucial research methods. In the absence of accurate data on the non-displaced population in Kashmir, India, there is a need to locate and record the details of the population and gain their trust to obtain critical and reliable details of their lived experience. Access to accurate information and the experiences of non-displaced KP families required personal interaction over a period supported by the ethnographic method (David & Sutton, 2011).

Ethnographic peace researchers emphasize that conflict should be understood as experienced by people who live within the conflict (Millar, 2018). It aims to study people in their time and space (Koonings et al., 2019). In addition, it helps glean reliable data from the respondents to comprehend the narratives of their daily lives as they engage with the researcher in the comfort of their daily routines (Krause, 2018). Participant observation and in-depth interviews are less or more structured (Bell & Karim, 1993; Fujii, 2010; Mazurana & Gale Andrews, 2013), where the researcher not only asks questions but also immerses in acquiring a broader meaning of the conversation with the respondent (Schwedler & Smith, 2019).

To further guide the research process, a grounded theory approach has been adopted to develop inductive dimensions grounded in systematically collected and analyzed data (Birhanu et al., 2017). The process begins with individual experiences and grows gradually to create abstract conceptual categories to combine, explicate, comprehend data, and recognize the pattern of relationships within the field (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). While the majority of the KP community that lives in the district Srinagar of Kashmir are not natives of Srinagar (KPs are often found living in Srinagar in rented homes, primarily because of their jobs), the KP population in district Pulwama is organic. KPs in Pulwama have permanent homes and did not leave Kashmir during or after the mass exodus of KPs in the 1990s. According to the 2011 census, Pulwama district comprises 327 villages and a total population of 560,440, with a Muslim majority and roughly 50 non-displaced KP homes. During the data collection, the non-displaced KP households were identified in eight villages: Noopora, Tumlehal, Murran, Lohdo, Sirnoo, Pinglena, Hawal, and Pampore of the Pulwama district.

The research participants were identified for data collected using the snowball sampling method. It is a form of purposive non-probability sampling technique that, while it does not guarantee complete representation, is useful when the population is remote and challenging to reach (Valdez & Kaplan, 1998), as is the case in the current study. Furthermore, surveying a micro-minority community where the majority of the population is forcefully displaced has created an attitude of suspicion and distrust among the non-displaced KP population. This sampling method has partially eliminated the probability of suspicion and distrust because the potential research participants meet the researcher through known references (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). All interviews were conducted in the participants' respective homes and the local Kashmiri language, as they preferred. The interviews lasted 40 to 60 minutes. Interviews were later transcribed in English, and a manual coding method was applied to identify the essential themes for the study. The fieldwork for the current article was conducted for seven months (January to July 2021) and continues to ensure rich data. The tools for data collection were semi-structured interviews, field notes, and participation observation. The primary data collection method was a semi-structured interview. The questions of semi-structured interviews were pre-determined. During the data collection, open-ended questions were asked to research participants to capture the lived experiences of the study participants (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998).

Additionally, semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to ask additional questions that added depth and helped to get quality data from the respondents. Furthermore, a manual coding method was adopted to break the data into chunks as themes gradually emerged. The process began with breaking down the data, searching for codes, and then categorizing, eventually resulting in themes (Holloway, 1997).

Apart from following the general parameters of the research design, the researcher ensured that the participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study and that they gave their consent for the interviews. All the participants consented to the interviews to be ethical and understood the benefits of this study before participating (Kelman, 1972). Participants were assured of the integrity and confidentiality of the study, and under no circumstances were their names revealed to anyone.

Additionally, identity confidentiality was assured except for Sanjay Tickoo, a well-placed social activist among the non-displaced KP population. Interestingly, when the researcher traveled to collect data outside his village, the aim was not to collect data at the first meeting but to build trust and amicable relationships with the research participants, which is essential to obtaining quality data. The researcher informed the participants about the research being conducted among the non-displaced KP population. Further, he paid weekly visits to the families and contacted them by phone.

Preliminary findings and interpretation

Broken community ties and collapse of social network

The loss of community ties was evident among the non-displaced KPs due to the displacement of the KP population from Kashmir. The displacement of KPs disrupted the bonding social capital (strong, homogenous ties), which was continuously under persistent tensions due to attacks by various terror groups. These strong ties within similar individuals or groups

generate cohesiveness and prepare a community to defend itself from outside threats (Putnam, 1993; Woolcock, 1998). In addition, close ties within the community provide social support and strengthen group solidarity (Agnitsch et al., 2006). However, the bonding capital of non-displaced KPs was plagued as these close ties within their community became weak due to the gradual displacement of a large number of community members. A respondent who works as a government schoolteacher blamed multiple mass exoduses for the decay of community ties among the non-displaced KPs, and he explained:

> *Those KPs who remained behind in Kashmir are not well connected. This happened because community bonds broke when the displacement of KPs started again in 1997, 1998, and 2003.*

Coleman (1990) emphasized the fundamental role of physical stability in the continuity of social relationships, where "individual mobility is destructive of social capital" (p. 320), and Putnam (2000) elaborated that changes in an individual's geographical location negatively affect social capital. Extended families (joint families) were often split, with some members leaving their homes and migrating to safer destinations. The ties that provide crucial social and psychological support for members of the community (Putnam, 2000) were plagued, and non-displaced KPs felt a sense of loss and loneliness without the support of the community members.

The community ties of non-displaced KPs were plagued by the multiple massacres of KPs after the 1990s, beginning from March 21, 1997, in Sangrampora village district Budgam, followed by the attack in Wandhama area in 1998. The subsequent attack in 2003 in Nandi Marg district Pulwama promulgated the mass exodus of non-displaced KPs from Kashmir. These attacks, starting in 1997, set a precedent for a major event when a significant KP population left Kashmir in 1997, 1998, and after that in 2003. The research participants, aged between 55–60 years, spoke of a sense of fear due to the targeted killing of KPs, which restricted mobility and social interaction among the non-displaced KP community members. The displaced KP population faced difficulties in new destinations, yet they utilized their educational and cultural capital to rebuild their lives in new places, enhancing their social capital (Sawhney, 2019). However, After the mass exodus of KPs from Kashmir, those KPs who stayed back in Kashmir were left without any community support. One participant from the non-displaced KP community described the situation as:

> *There was a sense of loneliness when 22 of 30 families left the town within three months. The feeling of fear and loss of trust was strong when one's extended family members left without sharing any information about the move.*

Such narratives explain the depletion of bonding capital, consisting of homogenous and inward-looking community ties that tend to provide support, build intimate relationships, and strengthen exclusive identities (Keating et al., 2005; Putnam, 2000). Traditional social networks collapse when a society is engrossed in violent conflict due to the displacement of the population (Stevens, 2016), as seen in the current study. Additionally, Studies on war-affected societies substantiate that social capital may be negative or absent due to broken social relationships (Ranis & Ramirez, 2000). In Kashmir, the continuous displacement of KPs plagued exclusive relationships of non-displaced KPs, leading to a collapse of traditional social networks and loss of community ties.

Distance and loneliness: Hindrance to community cohesion

The role of distance in the lack of community cohesion has been reiterated many times as a fundamental theme during the interviews. Respondents mention the lack of regular visits to relatives and friends due to physical distance. There is an insignificant number (798 families) of non-displaced KP families living in Kashmir. These families are scattered across the rural, urban areas across 20 districts in Kashmir and do not form a homogeneous unit even in the expression of class, familial, or kinship ties. The houses of non-displaced KPs are geographically distant from each other, which contributes to weak community cohesion. During interviews in Murran village, respondents mentioned that most of them have relatives in Pampore or Srinagar area, which is approximately 25 kilometers from Murran village, and it becomes challenging for them to meet on a day-to-day basis. Distance contributes to the non-availability of community members during emergencies or civil and social engagements. While the members speak fondly of relatives and friends from their community, they also emphasize the distance. A retired non-displaced KP professor in his 70s made this point explicitly:

> *Before the exodus, we (KPs) used to visit each other, but after the exodus,*
> *the numbers decreased. KPs in Kashmir stay far from each other; some live*
> *in Pulwama district, and some live in Budgam village.*

The KP youth also speaks of losing ties: *Most KPs migrated from here. KPs are rare in Kashmir now, especially for KP youth like me. I spend most of my time with my Muslim friends.*

New bonds have formed that are not necessarily homogenous but heterogeneous. The distance among the non-displaced KPs has become a significant obstacle to meeting one another regularly. The conversations exhibit an erosion of ethnic connections within the community caused by physical distance. Ethnic ties form the exclusive bonds that are integral to the formation and maintenance of bonding social capital. Furthermore, loneliness is a significant problem among young and old non-displaced KP population. Since the population is thinly spread out in the area, it weakens community cohesion. In the district of Pulwama, in southern Kashmir, there are 327 villages (Government of India, 2024). However, no single village has more than ten non-displaced KP households nearby. This physical and geographical distance among the families in the region consequently leads to minimal contact with each other and a sense of lack of caring and concern among families and members (Svendsen, 2006). Distance has added to the heightened sense of loneliness. The non-displaced KP families lead a segregated and isolated life, which hampers social capital and is a hindrance to trust and social cohesion in society (Cantle, 2018).

Loss of traditions

A tradition refers to beliefs or customs passed down within a community or groups of people with historical roots. It comprises components like religious practices, customs, rituals, norms, festivities, and cultural heritage, which are significant to social capital (Karunarathne & Lee, 2019). The social relationships accumulated by following tradition and festivals encourage collective actions and maintain the values that a community considers cardinal for the cohesiveness of society (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006). Furthermore, participation in festivals and large group attendance creates new networks and strengthens linguistic, ethnic, and historical bonds (Falassi, 1987).

After the mass exodus of KPs, the vibrant environment of Hindu festivals is debilitated in Kashmir, India. Even the common meeting places like Temples during the festivals are not exuberant. The effect of the gradual displacement of KPs from Kashmir is seen in multiple aspects of community life. Festivals and other social celebrations have been impinged upon, and non-displaced KPs often celebrate them privately within the family units. A non-displaced KP in his 40s awkwardly admitted:

> *As our community is out of Kashmir. There is a sense of loneliness. The reality is that we are just surviving in Kashmir; we are not living, and festivals do not feel like festivals anymore.*

Celebrating festivals and religious congregations plays a cardinal role in forming social capital as it offers a sense of belonging, increases community cohesion, and enhances trust within the community (Wepener et al., 2010). Most importantly, it creates a space where people meet each other, perform rituals, and pray together, strengthening the sense of group ties and creating an opportunity for people to establish relationships within the community. During the fieldwork in Pulwama, even at the common meeting places like temples, only a few members of the non-displaced KP community living in the vicinity performed rituals and traditions. The temples that are usually under the care of the head temple priest were managed by non-displaced KPs who are not priests. The non-availability of priests in Kashmir impacts the practice of religious rituals. These findings suggest that physical distance, loss of tradition, loneliness, and continued displacement contribute to the shrinking relationships among the non-displaced KPs, further adding to the displacement of the population from the region over the years, even today.

Therefore, bonding social capital is plagued by the decay of intra-community relations caused by displacement, Physical distance, loss of tradition, and the multiple mass exoduses since the 1990s affecting regular interaction within the non-displaced KP community members. Furthermore, non-displaced KPs are living in fear due to frequent attacks on them by terrorists, which is gradually leading them to leave Kashmir.

Lack of bonding leads to bridging

A study conducted between Hindus and Muslims in India concludes that regular contact between both communities reduces the risk of communal clashes, amplifies mutual trust, and promotes peace. At the same time, non-engagement in local associational life increases the probability of rumors, hatred, and communal clashes (Varshney, 2000). In the case of a non-displaced KP community, there is a lack of engagement within the community and a loss of homogenous ties due to continuous displacement. Weak intra-community ties have led to the development of heterogenous ties with selective KM families. These outward-looking ties of non-displaced KPs are restricted to a handful of KM families with whom non-displaced KPs share trust and relations for generations. These heterogeneous ties are not community-centric but focus on individual and familial relations as the bridging ties between the KP-KM community were not robust, even before the displacement of most of the KP population. What existed was a shared cordial relationship with Muslim friends and neighbors. A social activist, Sanjay Tickoo, within the non-displaced KP community in the region, mentions the lack of community ties between KPs and KMs:

> *We only had friendship or individual family bonds; there was no connection between the Hindu and Muslim communities of Kashmir; otherwise, why would the exodus of KPs take place?*

Another non-displaced KP participant in the interview told me that:

> *KPs do not trust the majority of Muslims in Kashmir because of what happened in the 1990s, and it can't be forgotten. However, we (KPs) still trust a few selective Muslim neighbors.*

The KP and KM never shared community-bridging ties. Since both communities belong to different religions, the bridging ties between them were not robust due to religious differences and lack of trust, leading to depleting social interaction with the larger Muslim community in Kashmir. Moreover, neither the government nor civil society addressed these issues. These inclusive ties between KPs and KMs were robust at an individual (person to person) and family level (family to family). They were plagued when the continuous displacement of KPs took place from Kashmir. However, with time, these relationships with few KM families based on trust from generations are strengthening and developing. Individual KM families have provided support and assurance of safety to the non-displaced KPs, which has enabled them to stay back in Kashmir, making it possible for some families to stay in Kashmir.

While conflict has plagued the bonding social capital of the non-displaced KPs, it has allowed bridging capital to evolve across communities. This supports the conclusion that "conflict does not necessarily deplete stocks of social capital but often transforms them and that new forms of social capital emerge during periods of conflict" (Colletta & Cullen, 2000, p. 15).

Conclusion

The main aim of this article was to explore and understand how violent conflict and displacement affect the social capital of the non-displaced KP community. The study is the first to be conducted in the region after the forceful displacement of the KP population. While some research has been conducted on the experience of the non-displaced KP population post-insurgency (Bhat & Bashir, 2023; Trisal, 2007), it does not focus on social capital. Hence, the study is significant as it sheds light on how the non-displaced KP community lived as a minority in Kashmir and how they maintained intra- and inter-community relationships after the displacement of the majority of the KP population.

The social relationships of the non-displaced KPs are plagued due to selective killing and continuous displacement from Kashmir. Those KPs who stayed behind lived their life in isolation and were left in the conflict zone without any community support. The separation of close friends and family members exacerbated their sense of isolation (Trisal, 2007). Moreover, sporadic killings of non-displaced KPs have heightened the sense of anxiety and fear within the community.

The inter-community relationships of non-displaced KPs are debilitated because of physical distance and underpopulation. This caused a lack of community cohesion and the collapse of the social networks among the non-displaced KP community living in Kashmir. Furthermore, the displacement of the majority of KPs has taken a heavy toll on the religious practices of non-displaced KPs. Celebrating festivals and the religious congregation is an unusual event

in the KP community in Kashmir. Most importantly, the non-availability of priests in Kashmir makes it challenging to perform religious practices and has further deteriorated the bonding ties of non-displaced KPs. Religious congregations create new networks contributing to the strengthening of bonding social capital. However, a handful of KP families in Kashmir, combined with the non-availability of priests, makes it difficult for this minority community to organize religious congregations and is a hindrance in building community cohesion.

The non-displaced KPs had no opportunity to engage in bonding ties as most of their community members were forcefully displaced. The weak bonding ties gave way to developing bridging ties with the selective Muslim families. These heterogeneous ties have developed due to the geographical proximity combined with generations of trust between KPs and selective KM families.

The bridging ties facilitated KPs in Kashmir and offered diverse forms of support in their daily lives. The findings show that non-displaced KPs no longer turn to homogenous ties for support due to physical distance and lack of community integration; instead, they rely on the support from heterogeneous ties they share with close KM neighbors and friends.

There is no official statistical data available from the state and central government departments of India regarding the population of non-displaced KPs living in Kashmir despite their minuscule number. Even the academic community has not paid much attention to this minority community. The study's preliminary findings will contribute to the literature on non-displaced KPs in Kashmir and pave the way for future research. This exploratory study intends to become the base for assisting policymakers in designing policies that can uplift and integrate this minority population in Kashmir. The restrictive bridging social capital that the non-displaced KPs share with selective Muslim families, if extended to the majority of the KM community, may integrate both communities at a more significant level.

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