

BONDING, BRIDGING, AND LINKING: SOCIAL CAPITAL AND THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF AFGHAN IMMIGRANTS IN PAKISTAN

Fakhta Zeib¹, Muhammad Haris², Maham Javaid^{*3}

¹Assistant Professor Government College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan

²Research Scholar, Government College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan

^{*3}Ph.D. Research Scholar, Government College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan

^{*}maham.201804873@gcuf.edu.pk

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17909294>

Keywords

social capital, social integration, bonding capital, bridging capital, linking capital, afghan immigrants

Article History

Received: 11 October 2025

Accepted: 29 November 2025

Published: 12 December 2025

Copyright @Author

Corresponding Author: *

Maham Javaid

Abstract

Afghan immigrants in Pakistan are one of the most stable and the largest populations of refugees in South Asia, which encounter complicated issues of displacement and marginalization as well as integration. This paper explores how social capital in terms of bonding, bridging and linking can affect the decision to integrate socially with natives among the Afghan immigrants living in Pakistan. Kinship and ethnic networks, which form the bonding capital, offer short-term support and sustainability of culture, but tend to contribute to insularity. Connecting capital, which is achieved via meetings with the host societies, allows access to the wider social resources and creates intercultural sensitivity, as well as connects immigrants to institutions, policies, and formal power structures. Using cross-sectional survey from (n=212) Afghan immigrants in Pakistan selected through snowball sampling, the study brings out the intersection of these social forms of capital to impact the prospects of social aspects of their integration. The results indicate that bonding capital provides resilience, whereas bridging capital and linking capital are essential in the integration in the long run and social cohesion between Afghan immigrants and Pakistani natives. Placing Afghan immigrants against the background of the socio-political life of Pakistan, the research adds up to the discussions about the integration of immigrants. Further, the research highlights the importance and expansion of diverse interpersonal online and offline networks, and further the accumulation of various forms of social capital.

INTRODUCTION

The migration and displacement have had a significant influence on the social landscape of Pakistan, and one of the most persistent and extensive refugees in the country, is the Afghanistan immigrants. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the year 1979, the various waves of Afghan refugees have been searching and taking shelter in Pakistan having formed communities that have now become generations. Their existence poses some burning

questions of the integration, belonging and relevance of social networks in their everyday lives. In this respect, the notion of social capital that is a set of resources inherent in social relations, trust, and networks is useful to analyze the way in which the process of integration among Afghan immigrants takes place. Notably, in the current globalized society, social capital is no longer limited to the physical realm of interaction, but is spreading to the digital arena

where the online networks are gradually becoming the determinants of inclusion and participation.

Offline social capital has traditionally been the core of immigrant survival and adaptation. The social support of housing, employment, and emotional sustenance is provided instantly within a community of Afghan communities that are connected on the basis of their kinship, ethnicity, and even belonging to the same cultural identity. These networks can keep the culture alive and offer a safety net in the marginalization situations (Zeib, 2021). The establishment of bridging ties, which is the result of exposure to the host communities, schools, workplace, and civil society, allow the Afghan immigrants to utilize more resources and develop intercultural awareness. The relationship between immigrants, institutions and power structures is also more disputed since immigration policy towards Afghans is often characterized by legal ambiguity, limited access to governmental resources, and unstable policies on registration and citizenship. Offline social capital, thus, is a source of resilience and a place of constraint and defines the lines of social integration in Pakistan.

Meanwhile, with the emergence of digital technologies, new aspects of online social capital have risen. Online community forums, social media sites, messaging applications give the Afghan immigrants other avenues through which they can establish networks, share information and engage in the discourse. Online bonding capital ensures that the Afghan communities have transnational relationship between relatives and diaspora networks which strengthens cultural identity with cross-border affiliation. Online bridging capital helps in reaching out to Pakistani citizens, NGOs, and advocacy groups and establishing platforms of communication and cooperation that would be unattainable through other means. At the same time, online connectivity to capital allows connecting with institutions, policymakers, and other international organizations and providing a way to express worries, gather support, and find resources (Zeib & Tahir, 2022). Physical mobility and legal recognition are constrained, and in this case, digital networks can increase the possibilities of visibility, empowerment, and integration.

This paper places Afghan immigrants in the Pakistan social and technological context and how offline and

online social capital overlap to determine their processes of integration. The research demonstrates the continuities as well as the changes in the experiences of immigrants among various other kinds of networks that exist both in the traditional and new digital platform. It examines the mobilization of social capital by Afghan immigrants to secure education, work, and civic engagement, as well as face obstacles to discrimination, legal precarity, and socio-economic marginalization.

Finally, it is essential to consider the two-fold nature of online and offline social capital as an important aspect of scholarship and policy. Offline networks cannot be thrown away to survive and to be culturally resilient, and online networks offer more and more avenues of visibility, advocacy, and wider integration. Through foregrounding such dynamics, this paper will contribute to the discussion of integration of refugees, diaspora studies and how the nature of social capital may change within the framework of protracted displacement. The conclusion demonstrates that Afghan immigrants are not only the objects of assistance but are capable of organizing themselves and using offline and online resources to maneuver their lives in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Online and offline social capital are becoming more essential to immigrants to aid their social integration. In the offline networks, trust, continuity and local support is offered, whereas in the online networks, there is an expansion of bridging ties, institutional access, and transnational ties. These two types of capital used jointly complement one another in determining outcomes of integration, so-called social capital popularized by Bourdieu (1986) and Putnam (2000) has been extensively used to explain the process of integrating immigrants. Social capital can be defined as networks, norms and trust which enable collective action and resource accessibility (Tariq & Zeib, 2023). Three dimensions are especially applicable in this framework; bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. All of them have different influences on the experiences of Afghan immigrants in Pakistan, one of the longest-lasting and largest populations of refugees worldwide (Khan & Khan, 2023).

Immigrants will end up being socially isolated without establishing networks with host societies. The capital offline bridging capital is derived during workplaces, schools, and civic organizations and helps build trust and collaboration with natives and improve the integration results (Putnam, 2000). The connection between social capital, in turn, would allow immigrants to access healthcare, education, and legal protections by connecting them with NGOs and government agencies (Zhang et al., 2024).

The integration of immigrants has changed with the emergence of digital technologies. Online social capital is defined as networks that are built online via social media, chat applications, and online forums. It is on these platforms, where immigrants can form transnational relationships with relatives back home and at the same time form new relationships with the host societies (Adedeji et al., 2024). On the one hand, the networks created online can be viewed as bridging processes that help the immigrants relate with a broader range of people than their ethnic enclaves. Culture exchange, language learning, and civic engagement are some of the benefits of social media that increase chances of integration (Yoo and Jang, 2024). Notably, the weak offline networks can be compensated with online social capital. Yoo and Jang (2024) have discovered that immigrants with weak offline connections usually use online platforms to improve their living standards and assimilation. This is in line with the social compensation hypothesis, which seeks to state that online networks might alleviate the drawbacks in the offline situations. Immigrants having strong offline connections, on the other hand, rely on online communication to enrich already existing networks, which is the social enhancement hypothesis.

Collectively, social capital form hybrid forms of integration and immigrants move between the physical and digital space to gain access to resources, develop trust, and develop a sense of belonging (Adedeji et al., 2024). There is a variation in the balance between online and offline capital between immigrant groups and contexts. As an illustration, online networks might be of more value to immigrants in restrictive settings and digital tools to strengthen offline networks in individuals with good support in the community. Finally, the performance of integration will be based on the digital-face-to-face

network synergy. We suggest following hypothesis based on literature.

H1. Afghan immigrants who actively participate in both online and offline social networks positively influence their integration outcomes.

Social Identity and Bonding Social Capital

The networks fabricated in family, ethnicity, religious, and neighborhood associations, which offer bonding capital, provide emotional support, cultural preservation and instant help in settling or getting a job (Zhang et al., 2024). The communication with offline network members, on the other hand, is a source of support to most immigrants as soon as they overcome their displacement and marginalization issues. Nevertheless, the dependence on bonding capital would result into segregation and low integration. Pakistan has many Afghan communities, which tend to create close-knit enclaves with the help of a common language, culture, and traditions to preserve identity and support one another (Yousaf, 2025). These networks assist the refugees to deal with displacement by providing housing, informal job avenues and emotional support. Bonding social capital is strong ties that are found in homogenous groups i.e. family, kin, and ethnic ties. Bonding capital has played a critical role in survival to the Afghan immigrants.

Bonding capital, however, equally may produce social isolation. The Afghan communities at times restrict their socialization with the Pakistani society by keeping to themselves. This isolating effect strengthens the culture, but limits wider integration. According to scholars, bonding ties enhance resilience but when they are not supplemented with bridging and linking ties, they might actually enhance marginalization (Putnam, 2000). Following hypotheses are suggested.

H2. Afghan immigrants who had stronger bonding social capital (kinship and ethnic networks) have stronger ties with their culture than with Pakistani cultures.

H3. Afghan immigrants who had stronger bonding social capital (kinship and ethnic networks) will have low social integration with Pakistani natives.

Social Identity and Bridging Social Capital

Bridging social capital includes connections across various groups, enabling immigrants to interact with host communities. For Afghan immigrants in Pakistan, bridging capital is often facilitated through neighborhood, schools, and workplaces interactions. Research on labor market inclusion highlights that Afghan immigrants' both documented as well as undocumented struggle to access formal employment, yet informal labor markets offer opportunities for interaction with Pakistanis (Ali & Javed, 2024). These connections can enhance coexistence, foster trust, and lessen prejudice.

However, despite facilitations the obstacles still exist. The bridging capital is usually hampered by discrimination, a competition of limited resources, and legal limitations (Yousaf, 2025). The Afghan refugees are often treated as potential competitors in the field of economic activity or security threats, which restricts their possibility to establish meaningful relationships with the natives. In those instances where bridging capital is the case, it plays a major role in the formation of social cohesion and integration and enables Afghans to live in Pakistani society more efficiently (Khan and Khan, 2023). Based on the literature, following hypothesis is formulated.

H4. The more that the Afghan migrants bridge the social capital (having affiliations with the host society) the more social integration they will have with the Pakistani society.

Social Identity and Linking Social Capital

The act of linking social capital means vertical relationships with the institutions and authorities, including NGOs, UNHCR, and governmental organizations. There are numerous studies which have established that the online linking capital links the immigrants to the resources and institutions including the job portals, the government, and the NGO support programs. To the Afghan immigrants, access to capital is essential in accessing education, healthcare, and legal protection. The policies that Pakistan has had concerning the Afghan refugees have long been ambivalent, bouncing off between hospitality and restriction (Ali & Javed, 2024). Although the intervention of the NGOs and

international organizations is essential, lack of a universal law on refugees in Pakistan means that Afghans cannot fully enjoy institutional relationship. Linking social capital benefits group and individuals pursue combined strategies for welfare, supporting social identity (Christoforou, A., 2013). In line with the other former studies, Claridge, T. (2018) enlightens that linking social capital connects communities to power structures and institutions. These ties provide recognition and legitimacy, which empower marginalized groups and strengthen collective identity.

Linking capital hence remains fragile. Afghan immigrants often rely on temporary documentation, which restricts employment and mobility. Without solid institutional connections, their mixing remains risky. Strengthening linking capital through international support and inclusive policies is crucial for long lasting integration (Yousaf, 2025).

The mixing of Afghan immigrants in Pakistan is best understood through the interaction of linking capital, bonding, and bridging. Bonding ties are the ones that ensure cultural continuity and survival, bridging ties lead to less marginalization and coexistence, and linking ties lead to structural opportunities. In case of the inequity of these dimensions, where the economic and social inclusion of Afghans is at risk of being omitted, such as a linking, strong bonding and weak bridging (Putnam, 2000).

According to recent sociological research, integration is not a progressive process but a negotiating process that is dynamic between refugees and the host communities. The fact that the bonding capital allows Afghan immigrants to be resilient illustrates the necessity to increase the bridging and linking mechanisms, on the one hand. These dimensions can be balanced with the aid of programs that promote intercultural dialogue, inclusive workforce policies, and institutional recognition (Ali and Javed, 2024). Thus, we propose following hypothesis.

H5. The Afghani immigrants who have stronger linking social capital (access to institutions, policies, and formal structures) record high long-term social integration in Pakistan as compared to those with minimal institutional ties.

Methods and Measures

In this study, the researcher applied a quantitative survey design to investigate the correlation between three dimensions of social capital including bonding, bridging and linking capital and the social integration of the Afghan immigrants in Pakistan. The design was cross sectional, concentrating on Afghan refugees currently living in urban areas of Pakistan. Given the detached and often undocumented nature of Afghan refugee communities, a snowball sampling technique was used. Initial participants were recognized through Afghan cultural associations, community leaders, and local NGOs. These participants then mentioned other eligible respondents, letting the sample to expand organically. A total of 212 Afghan refugees participated in the survey. This method was particularly suitable for achieving hidden populations with restricted formal records. The sample involved Afghan immigrants aged 18 years and above, with diverse backgrounds in terms of gender, education, generational level as well as length of stay in Pakistan. Additional criteria required participants to have stayed in Pakistan for at least one year to confirm sufficient exposure to host society connections.

Measures

Bonding Social Capital extent of institutional trust and accessibility measured through items assessing the strength of ties within family, kinship, and ethnic networks, frequency of interaction with Afghan relatives, reliance on ethnic community for support, and perceived trust within close networks

Bridging Social Capital is measured through items capturing connections with members of the host society. Indicators included participation in mixed social activities, friendships with Pakistanis, and perceived acceptance by local communities.

Linking Social Capital is measured through items assessing vertical ties with institutions and authorities. The extent of institutional trust and accessibility is measured through indicators included access to NGOs, government services, and legal documentation support.

Social Integration is measured through operationalized as the degree to which Afghan immigrants feel included in Pakistani society. The indicators include such as participation in local

cultural events, ability to communicate in Urdu, employment in local markets, and sense of belonging. Williams (2006) proposed Social Capital Scales (SSC) to measure the level of social capital that people experience on a daily basis. An eighteen-item SSC scale (bonding, bridging, and linking) is used to measure Online Social Capital and Offline Social Capital, with each indicator measuring social capital generated in both face-to-face and online environments. Bonding and bridging social capital refer to horizontal and vertical social relationships with people, respectively. The questions are answered on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree); the higher the score, the greater the social capital.

Levels of integration with Pakistani society were evaluated using the Vancouver Index of Acculturation (VIA) created by Ryder, Alden, and Paulhus (2000) and the IPL Integration Index (IPL-12) (Harder et al., 2018). VIA comprises of 20 entries of which 12 items are used which match to the cultural setting of Pakistan, and Integration index consists of 12 items. The items are answered using a 5-point Likert scale and a 9-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater levels of acculturation. Cronbach alpha values of .916 for the Social Capital Scale and .924 for the Index of Acculturation and IPL integration were calculated.

Results and Analysis

Approximately one-fourth of the participants were female (24.1%, $n = 51$). The sample's mean age was 38.42 ($SD = 10.17$), with over 64% of participants being between the ages of 30 and 40. A bit more than half were married (54.2%, $n = 114$) and had children (75.8%, $n = 161$). The sample was mixed in terms of education, such as having attended school (52%, $n = 108$) and college (48%, $n = 104$). As a result, the socioeconomic status was low: (59%, $n = 125$) had a monthly family income of less than Rs. 60,000, (23%, $n = 48$) between Rs. 60,000 and Rs. 70,000, and (18%, $n = 38$) and more than Rs. 100,000. A little over half of the participants (55%, $n=116$) had a full-time or part-time job. Twelve years was the average duration of stay in Pakistan ($SD = 9.04$). The participants moved to Pakistan mostly for earning livelihood, minor reasons include schooling or joining business

of their previously established family, or to follow a spouse.

Although nearly two-thirds of the participants (64%, $n = 135$) were eager to establish their lives with their were more likely to work or attend school with Pakistani colleagues. The majority of people (77.2%, $n = 241$) used mobile phones and the internet (WhatsApp) to stay in touch with their family and friends who were in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

For referential statistics, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the measurement models (social capital and Social integration in Pakistan) and a path analysis were utilized. The construct validity of the SSC and VIA measurement models was examined using CFA. Second, the route models were evaluated to look at the direct relationships between social capital constructs and the social integration of Afghan immigrants in Pakistan. Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and comparative fit index (CFI) values were $>.90$ for model fit measurement factor loadings $>.3$, RMSEA $>.05$, 90% RMSEA between .05 and .10, and non-significant chi square. The non-significant chi-square

families in Pakistan, nearly one-third (36%, $n = 77$) had originally intended to return to Afghanistan. The participants had more interactions with Afghani friends in their daily lives, despite the fact that they indicates the degree of fit between the proposed model and the observed data, but its findings are especially sensitive to sample size, thus care must be used.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Measurement Models

The CFA revealed that both measurements were reliable and valid. Social capital was indicated by six variables: online bonding, online bridging, online linking, offline bonding, and offline bridging, offline linking. Hence a modified model (CFI = .946; TLI = .933; RMSEA = .067; 90% RMSEA between .000 and .152; $\chi^2 = 2.701$, $df = 1$, $p = .094$) was designed. Figure 1 shows the measurement model of online and offline social capital of Afghan immigrants in Pakistan (further categorized as bonding, bridging and linking social capital) with factor loading.

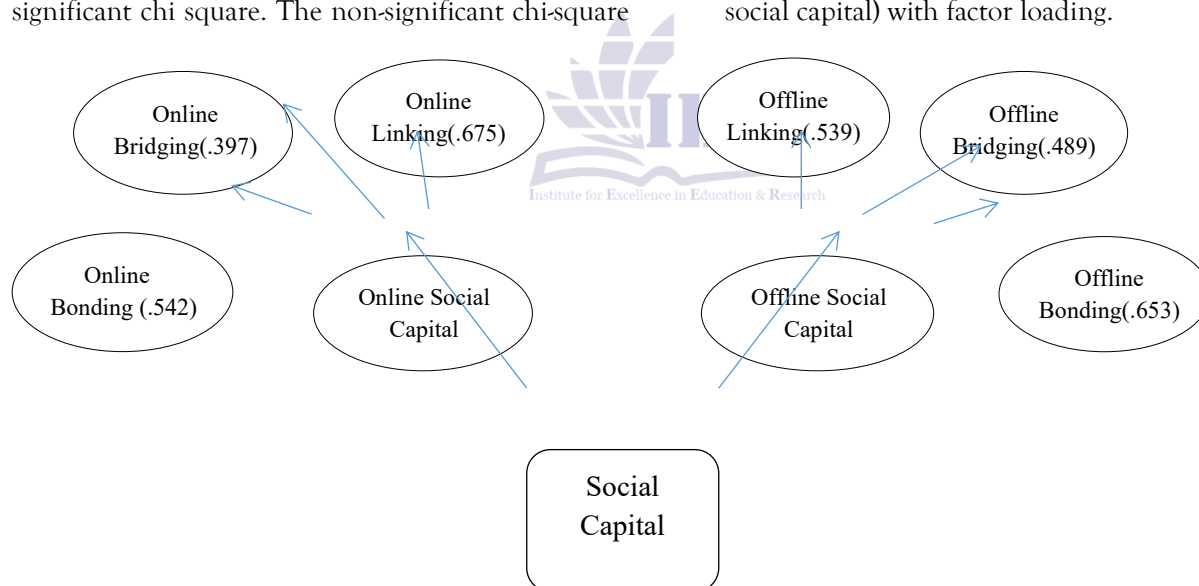


Figure 1. Measurement Model for Online Social Capital and Offline Social Capital

Social integration of Afghan Immigrants in Pakistan was indicated by items from VIA (a modified model, CFI = .961; TLI = .923; RMSEA = .089; 90% RMSEA between .043 and .091; $\chi^2 = 111.098$, $df = 32$, $p < .05$) and IPL-12 (a modified model, CFI = .919; TLI = .899;

RMSEA = .071; 90% RMSEA between .015 and .095; $\chi^2 = 103.112$, $df = 34$, $p < .05$. Figure 2 depicts the measurement model of Social Integration of Afghan immigrants in Pakistan

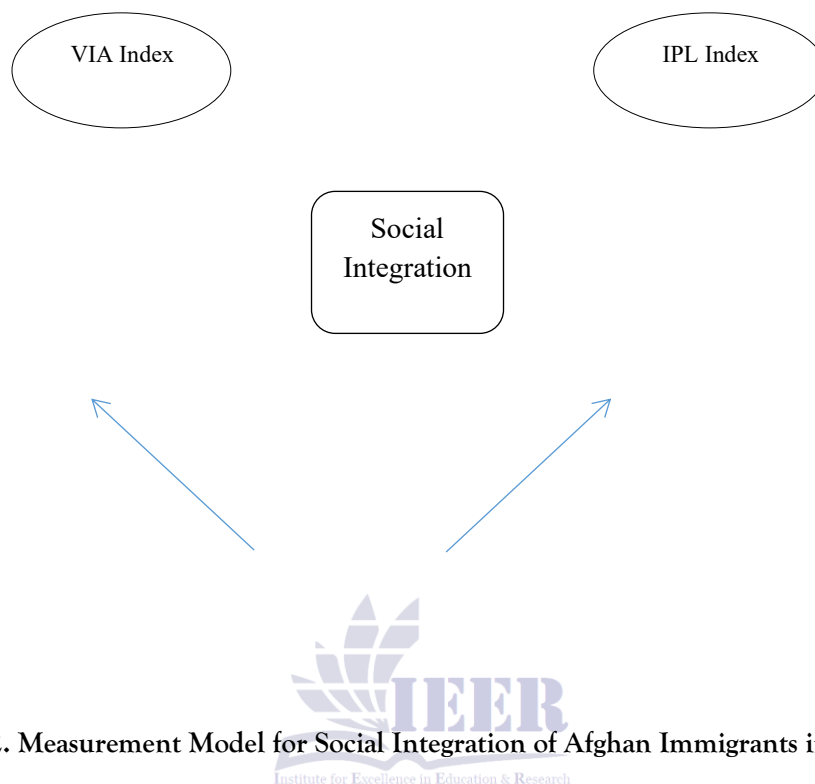


Figure 2. Measurement Model for Social Integration of Afghan Immigrants in Pakistan

Seventy percent of all respondents reported participation in at least one community activity, while fifty-seven percent engaged in at least one kind of volunteering within the twelve months before the survey. These results align with the latest data. Regarding participation in community activities, there seems to be no disparity between the two genders. Males are less inclined to engage in volunteering compared to females. Furthermore, individuals with independent children perceive that they have adequate interpersonal interaction. In all situations, having children had a favorable and statistically significant impact on volunteering at the 1 percent level.

As far as the age and education are concerned, the two surveys similarly exhibit consistent and strong results, which are in line with the current literature and theoretical predictions (Glaeser et al., 2002). Feelings of sufficient interpersonal interaction, safety, and inclusion are significantly enhanced by higher

education. Similar benefits are evident with respect to employment: being employed is connected with greater participation in social activities, more volunteering, and stronger perceptions of appropriate contact, safety and inclusion. Nonetheless, there may be causal relationships between employment and social capital in both directions. Utilizing social relationships is a typical job-search tactic; social networks may not transfer straight into higher compensation. Instead, social contacts may aid to cut search expenses and provide better employment matches. Park et al. (2022) demonstrate, using data on migrants in Spain, that social capital within the migrant group is more significant than quantifiable networks of individuals when entering the job market of the destination country.

Nonetheless, many of the coefficients of 'years after migration' are not statistically significant, demonstrating considerable variation in migrant social integration with increasing years of residence. Years in the destination country may be a less essential

driver of social outcomes than it is of economic outcomes, which was not the part of study. In a comprehensive review, Zhang et al. (2023) contend

Path Model Analysis

The paths linking the constructs are evaluated for their fitness once the measurement models have been tested (Schreiber et al., 2006). With $\chi^2 = 198.307$ (df = 69; $p < .05$), the goodness-of-fit indices for the relationship between social capital and social integration of Afghan immigrants in Pakistan were CFI = .758, TLI = .819, RMSEA = .081, and 90% RMSEA = .065-.086. The other two metrics produced an adequate fit between the model and the observed data, despite the TLI showing a weak fit. The standardized regression weight for the path was .618 ($p < .05$).

Non-physical interaction with family and friends, primarily via social media, email, and phone conversations, surpasses in-person contact across all demographics and years. Migrants evidently

that migrant participation in their community may not inevitably contribute to their social integration in this group.

experience reduced face-to-face interaction with family compared to natives in Pakistan. For the majority of migrants, weekly in-person communication with relatives and friends who have been left behind is either impossible or limited to video chats. 49.6% of recent immigrants reported seeing family members in person at least once a week, perhaps as a result of the growing popularity of in-person video calls via platforms like WhatsApp. On the other hand, 61.4% of long-term migrants interacted with family members in person. The disparity in the corresponding percentages indicates that while migrants' social networks in the destination country are initially small, they eventually expand. As they do, face-to-face contact replaces non-face-to-face contact in the engagement.

Table 1 Afghan immigrants' participation in social activities

Social Activities	Participation rate, %age	Bonding (p value)	Bridging (p value)	Linking (p value)	Employment rate vs participation	Employment rate vs Not participation
Participating in religious activities	78	0.01	0.16	0.01	95	67
Working as charity Volunteer	23	0.01	0.23	0.17	67	56
Working/ have worked in political organizations/ activities	36	0.03	0.01	0.03	87	87
Participated in fundraising for an organization	16.4	0.02	0.06	0.01	56	84
joining community clubs	15.5	0.02	0.02	0.02	68	67
Participating in school activities	54	0.01	0.01	0.03	89	55
Participating in community services	27.6	0.01	0.12	0.01	54	32
Volunteering to be a member of a committee or board	11	0.13	0.03	0.08	43	21
Joined any sports activity	56.2	0.11	0.01	0.01	67	23
Participating in organized sports	46	0.01	0.02	0.26	84	41

Table2 Regression results of Afghan immigrants' social capital

Activities for Social Capital	Mean	Factor loading	Regression Coefficient
Had face-to-face contact with family at least once a week	7.93	.882	.455***
Had non-face-to-face contact with family at least once a week	7.86	.634	.651***
Had face-to-face contact with any of your colleagues at least once a week	8.56	.698	.657*
Had non face-to-face contact with any of your colleagues at least once a week	7.43	.743	.433
Had face-to-face contact with friends at least once a week	6.45	.877	.418*
Had non face-to-face contact with friends at least once a week	6.74	.756	.365***
Had face-to-face contact with administration of educational institution of their children at least once a week	2.45	.567	.567**
Had non face-to-face contact with administration of educational institution of their children at least once a week	3.20	.667	.671**
Felt lonely in last four weeks	6.55	.465	.389
Trust held for people in Pakistan	5.23	.786	.541
Feeling about a new neighbor who was a different ethnicity to you	5.68	.867	.536*
Express your identity freely	3.73	.432	.431

Note: Determinants of Social Capital, mean values, regression coefficient significance*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$, $N = 212$, Adjusted $R^2 = .437$, AVE = .633

Discussion

Given the current situation of social, cultural and economic discrimination of Afghan immigrant in Pakistan (Zeib et al., 2025), findings direct more valid causal evidence of the relationship between social capital and social integration of Afghan immigrants in Pakistan. These findings are quite contrary to previous research, in which causality in social capital could not produce valid results. For instance, previous research shows that bridging social capital could help a migrant find work at young, creative companies, on the other hand, these companies might also actively seek out migrants since cultural variety boosts their inventiveness (Roskrug & Poot, 2024; Ozgen et al., 2014).

The current literature to date on social capital impacts gives minimal direction for policymakers on how to use social capital for immigrants' social, cultural and

economic integration. Networks are obviously important which promote and support (via information and resources) "connectivity" in the home and workplace is anticipated to benefit both individuals and the community. In any event, the distinction between bonding, bridging, and linking will be important for policy development, not just for employment outcomes but also for economic growth and well-being.

The findings suggest that the integration of Afghan immigrants in Pakistan can be facilitated by social capital, which can be cultivated via both offline and online means. Virtual connections can be as authentic and essential as in-person interactions for immigrants seeking mainstreaming in a new country. Therefore, in addition to traditional, in-person services, professional services and assistance should be offered online.

Community participation proved to be an important indicator in the context of the Afghan immigrants in Pakistan. Whereas there is gender equality in activities, women are, in most cases, the forefront of volunteering, which strengthens social cohesion between families. Dependency makes the families of children feel more interpersonally linked, and parenthood contributes greatly to volunteering, which underscores the role of kinship duties in making the host communities to be more integrated, solid, and involved in civic work.

High community involvement and volunteering among the Afghan residing in Pakistan are indicators of adaptive resilience and assimilation in the society. Equal participation in activities implies that there is equal cultural interest, but women tend to take up more volunteer positions, which strengthens the unity of people. Families having dependent children feel that they have satisfactory social interactions and parenthood plays an essential role in increasing the probability of volunteering. This highlights the role of the responsibility of kinship in creating civic action, reinforcing inter-human connections and creating trust in the host societies. Finally, children are agents of more interaction, connecting the immigrant families to the wider Pakistani community.

Employment is a critical factor determining the integration of the Afghan immigrants in Pakistan. Employment does not only help to make people financially stable but also allows a higher involvement in social events and volunteering, enhancing feelings of safety and belonging. Working environments widen circles of interaction, decrease isolation and boost trust, which can help immigrants to interact more assertively in the community. To the family, getting a job also enhances the feeling of sufficient contact and belonging, demonstrating that the opportunities of livelihood are key to the development of resiliency, solidarity, and social cohesion over time.

The social activities and volunteering experiences of the Afghan immigrants in Pakistan lead to various types of social capital depending on the nature of the interaction. Face to face bonding capital is usually created in close knit Afghan communities which strengthen solidarity and continuity of the culture. The bridging capital occurs when the immigrants interact with Pakistani neighbors or institutions

leading to the attainments of trust and cross ethnic integration. In the meantime, the connection to capital is established in the form of formalized volunteering or NGOs, connecting migrants to formal networks of support. The interactions that occur online can also widen the scope, but can in many times lack the level of trust building that comes with face-to-face and personal communication. This brings out the influence of medium of participation as a way of creating the pathways of inclusion and resilience.

For Afghan immigrants in Pakistan, networking through social activities often reflects potential pathways of integration rather than immediate outcomes. Bonding capital emerges strongly in migrant-dense areas, where even casual encounters reinforce solidarity and cultural continuity within Afghan communities. Bridging capital is more likely in contexts where Afghans form a minority, such as schools, workplaces, or mixed neighborhoods, enabling cross-cultural trust and cooperation with Pakistanis. Linking capital depends on structured activities such as training programs, religious institutions, or civic volunteering, that connect migrants to formal networks of support and authority. This classification highlights how the composition of social spaces shapes opportunities for cohesion, resilience, and long-term inclusion.

Limitations and Recommendations

The study has certain limitations; first, the sample was not very representative as the number of Afghan immigrants who agreed to participate was small (63% response rate could be acquired). Even though the questionnaire was well designed in English, Pashto, and Dari to make it more accessible, a significant proportion of the potential respondents were unable or unwilling to fill in the questionnaire, which lowered the level of participation. Second, the information gathered was characterized by a significant number of responses that were not completed making the analysis less robust and limiting the level of insights that could be reached. This could have been caused by the unwillingness of the participants to share certain information or the inability to understand some questions. Lastly, the immigrant population of Afghanistan was very dispersed which made sampling difficult. The scattered nature of the settlement patterns also

restricted the sampling methods that could be used since it was hard to use more systematic or randomized sampling methods and it is likely to impact on the generalization of the findings.

We recommend that, in Pakistani cultural contexts, the effects of migrant social capital should also be taken into account considering both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Further, More focus is also required on the dynamics of social capital development and its impact on Afghan immigrants' social integration. The impact of social capital may fluctuate over time, and the dynamics of social interactions may be influenced by numerous related factors.

REFERENCES

- Adedeji, A., Metzner, F., & Buchcik, J. (2024). Social capital and immigrant wellbeing in the digital age. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 9, 1524996. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2024.1524996>
- Ali, S., & Javed, H. (2024). Labour market inclusion of Afghan refugees in Pakistan through Bourdieu's theory of capital. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*, 40(8), 1032–1050. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-09-2022-0234>
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood.
- Claridge, T. (2018). Functions of social capital – bonding, bridging, linking. *Social Capital Research & Training*
- Christoforou, A. (2013). On the identity of social capital and the social capital of identity. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*
- Glaeser, E.L., Laibson, D., & Sacerdote, B. (2002). An economic approach to social capital. *The Economic Journal*, 112: F439-F458.
- Harder, N., Figueroa, L., Gillum, R. M., Hangartner, D., Laitin, D. D., & Hainmueller, J. (2018). Measuring integration: The case for a shorter, multidimensional index. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 41(9), 1599–1619. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1411960>
- Khan, A., & Khan, S. (2023). A historical analysis of the socio-economic implications of Afghan refugees for Pakistan. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 7(2), 1123–1140.
- Ozgen, C., Peters, C., Niebuhr, A., Nijkamp, P., & Poot, J. (2014). Does cultural diversity of migrant employees affect innovation? *International Migration Review*, 48(S1): S377-S416.
- Park, S.S., Lai, T., & Waldinger, R.D. (2022). Unequal ties: immigrants' initial social capital and labor market stratification. *Social Forces*, 101(1): 473–505.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon & Schuster.
- Ryder, A., Alden, L., & Paulhus, D. (2000). Is acculturation uni-dimensional or bi-dimensional? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79(1), 49–65.
- Roskrug, M. J., & Poot, J. (2024). The Relationship between Social Capital and Migrant Integration, Ethnic Diversity, and Spatial Sorting. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 17012. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4831652>
- Schreiber, J. B., Stage, F. K., King, J., Nora, A., & Barlow, E. A. (2006). Reporting structural equation modeling and confirmatory factor analysis results: A review. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 99(6), 323–337.
- Tariq, R., & Zeib, F. (2023). Political empowerment among young voters: Social media, partisanship and the moderating role of political interest. *Comunicar*, 30(74), 95–106. <https://doi.org/10.3916/C74-2023-08>
- Williams, D. (2006). On and off the 'net: Scales for social capital in an online era. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 11(2), 593–628.
- Yousaf, F. (2025). Conflict-induced displacement in Pakistan: A sociological study of lived experiences of Afghan immigrants. *Journal of Migration Studies*, 12(1), 45–67.

- Yoo, N., & Jang, S. H. (2024). Enhancing or compensating? Role of on- and offline social capital on immigrant well-being. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 27(5), 152–165. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2024.0152>
- Zeib, F. (2021). The Influence of Social Media Political Expression on Traditional Voting Behavior of University Students in Pakistan : Exploring the implications of Caste-based and Family pressure-based Voting. *Indian Journal of Economics and Business*, 20(4), 827–841.
- Zeib, F., & Tahir, M. W. (2022). Is Social Media a Suitable Platform of Political Expression and Awareness for University Students in Pakistan? *Pakistan Journal of Social Research*, 04(01), 119–132. <https://doi.org/10.52567/pjsr.v4i1.351>
- Zhang, X., Lu, X., Huang, C., Liu, W., & Wang, G. (2024). The impact of social capital on migrants' social integration: Evidence from China. *Sustainability*, 16(13), 5564. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16135564>
- Zhang, Y., You, C., Pundir, P., & Meijering, L. (2023). Migrants' community participation and social integration in urban areas: A scoping review. *Cities*, 141: 104447.

