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DISCUSSION PAPER SERIES NO. 2018-50

# Exploring the Presence of Cognitive Social Capital in Philippine Communities

*Catharine E. Adaro*



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Exploring the Presence of Cognitive Social Capital  
in Philippine Communities

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## **Abstract**

Public trust in government and the strengthened solidarity are the aspects of social capital that can increase community participation in the development programs run by the government. Social capital is a resource that exists in relationships, interactions, communications, and mutual cooperation. In this study the cognitive social capital is discussed and measured using two proxies, trust and solidarity. The presence of the different forms of social capital – bridging, bonding and linking – in different levels of local governance (i.e. provincial, municipal, barangay) was also explored utilizing social capital measurement instruments patterned after the SC-IQ tool developed by the World Bank. Findings reveal that compared to city/municipal leaders and most people in the community (generalized trust), household respondents give higher regard to barangay and provincial officials in terms of honesty and trustworthiness.

**Keywords:** social capital, cognitive social capital, trust, generalized trust, solidarity, local governance, bridging social capital, bonding social capital, linking social capital

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# Exploring the presence of cognitive social capital in Philippine communities

***Catharine E. Adaro\****

## 1. Introduction

The simplest understanding of social capital can be denoted as social relationships and interactions among individuals, groups, households, organizations, and communities which allow people to work together for a productive outcome (Szreter and Schuller 2000). Contributions of social capital to the development of societies are valued through the increasing empirical research in social capital and its contribution to local governance. In the Philippines, there are numerous studies linking social capital on various aspects such as gender (Godquin and Quisumbing 2008), networks and trust (Abad 2005) and productivity growth in agriculture (Edillon 2013), among others. This study, on the other hand, attempts to look into a more detailed aspect of social capital – cognitive social capital in terms of trust and solidarity - and explore its presence in the community. As public trust and strengthened solidarity in government are the aspects of social capital that can increase community participation, the findings on the existence and magnitude of the forms of social capital in the communities may inform local government leaders on how to effectively implement government development programs by working with groups of people with potential of strengthening social capital in the communities.

## 2. Rationale of the Study

This study attempts to provide an overview of cognitive social capital as a concept in local governance research and provide an illustration of its measure by utilizing a household survey data generated from a PIDS study in 2016<sup>1</sup>. In particular, this study will try to measure the two aspects of cognitive social capital – generalized trust and solidarity – utilizing World Bank’s Integrated Questionnaire for the Measurement of Social Capital (SC-IQ). This study also aims to inform which form of social capital – bridging, bonding, and linking - is prominently demonstrated in the communities of the household samples. The findings of this study may inform policy and decision makers of the current state of social capital existing in the communities and may capitalize on it in order to help facilitate strengthening social capital at the community level, to which government may target for a more efficient provision of government services.

## 3. Social Capital Defined

The concept of social capital has been conceptualized and operationalized in countless ways. According to Robert Putnam (Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* 2000), it comprises of “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them (Putnam 2000). This implies that social capital is a structural (networks) and attitudinal (norms) phenomenon that is the property of communities rather than individuals. At the heart of the concept, then, is the notion that relational resources within a community can be harnessed by certain actors to achieve desired outcomes – which may or may not be beneficial for the public good.

Social capital is also defined based on the relationship among individuals. This definition comes from a number of social capitalist such as Loury (1992) who describes social capital as naturally occurring

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<sup>1</sup> See PIDS Discussion Paper 2017-553 – Assessment of the BUB Program: Improving Access of Local Communities to Basic Services and Strengthening Social Capital

social relationships among persons which promote or assist the acquisition of skills and traits valued in the marketplace, an asset which may be as significant as financial bequests in accounting for the maintenance of inequality in our society; Pennar (1997) claims that it is the web of social relationships that influences individual behavior and thereby affects economic growth; Schiff (1992) mentions that it is the set of elements of the social structure that affects relations among people and are inputs or arguments of the production and/or utility function; Bebbington (2002) argues that it is relationships in which people invest, and in which generate a web of related social phenomena – mainly the role that interpersonal relationships, club membership and social networks play in the efficiency of social exchange.

There are many possible representations of social capital. Broadly, social capital can be seen in networks, reciprocity, trust, social norms, personal and collective efficacy (Bourdieu, 1983, Coleman, 1988; and Onyx and Bullen, 2000). Network is both of individuals and groups. Reciprocity is about the expectation that in short or long term, kindness and services will be returned. Trust refers to the willingness to take initiatives in a social context based on the assumption that others will respond as expected. Social norms are the unwritten shared values that direct behavior and interaction. Lastly, personal and collective efficiency is the active and willing engagement of citizens within a participative community. For Narayan and Cassidy (2001), social capital can be divided into seven dimensions such as group characteristics, norms, togetherness sociability, connections, volunteerism, and trust. These dimensions manifest themselves in various combinations and shape the interaction among the members of a group, organization, (Bordieu 1983) community, society, or simply network and can be studied through various perspectives (Qureshi, 2006).

### 3.2 The Cognitive Social Capital

The cognitive form of social capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998) is a result of mental processes and ideas empowered by culture and ideology which generate values, attitudes and beliefs. During the process of attitude formation people are exposed to various influences of their culture, parents, groups and individual personality traits. Cognitive social capital of individuals is the outcome of frequent interactions while sharing the same practices, which lead the individuals to learn skills, knowledge and common conventions (Aslam, et al. 2013). The cognitive dimension facilitates the combination and exchange of knowledge among different parts.

#### 3.2.1 Generalized and Particularized Trust and Solidarity Dimension of Cognitive Social Capital

The World Bank (Dudwick, et al. 2006) defines solidarity as the dimension of cognitive social capital that refers to the extent to which people feel they can rely on relatives, neighbors, colleagues, acquaintances, key service providers, and even strangers, either to assist them or (at least) do them no harm. Meanwhile, generalized trust is defined as an individual's evaluation of the trustworthiness of the average person, i.e. people in general (Glanville and Paxton 2007). Generalized trust is of interest to research on social capital due to its hypothesized potential to enable people to connect with others unlike themselves, thereby granting access to resources embedded in different social spheres. Particularized trust, on the other hand, concerns trust in specific people. Particularized trust generally refers to trust in neighbors, which is assumed to indicate the resources and relationships available in the local community

### 3.3 Binding, Bridging and Linking Social Capital: The Forms of Social Capital

In the literature, social capital is typically identified into three forms: bonding, bridging and linking. Each form is well suited for building different types of relationships, but, must be developed and sustained together to ensure community well-being (Woodson, et al. 2016). Bonding social capital is described as relationships in a homogenous group – such as within a peer group, family, culture, religion, gender or ethnicity – where individuals share a location, identity, values or demographic

characteristics. On the other hand, bridging social capital is described as horizontal relationships between heterogeneous groups from different geographic locations, ethnicities, religions, genders or other identity groups. These relationships or networks cross social stratifications and identities, connecting members of a homogeneous group to “extra-local networks, crossing ethnic, racial and religious cleavages (Aldrich 2012). Bridging social capital is often a product of involvement in organizations, such as civic and political institutions, parent-teacher associations, sports and interest clubs or educational and religious groups. Finally, linking social capital is identified as vertical relationships between social networks with different levels of power or social status. This includes relationships and engagement that cross hierarchies or “vertical distance” such as links between decision makers (e.g. higher level government, political elites) and general public, individuals from different social classes, communities and international NGOs, or communities and the private sector. The presence of linking social capital suggests individuals and groups are able to connect with people who have access to external resources or power.

### 3.4 Cognitive Social Capital and Good Governance

Trust, an aspect of cognitive social capital can increase citizen participation in groups and networks that help them identify common priorities and more effectively voice their demands. When people in the communities can clearly and articulately voice their demands, they can better monitor the improvement of government services, increasing accountability. According to Putnam (2000), building relationships and trust at different levels leads to increased citizen engagement and more responsive governance. Social capital flows from individual interaction to larger organizations and collective activities, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of governments and institutions. At the local level, bonding social capital helps like-minded individuals act collectively and begin to develop a voice; bridging social capital amplifies citizen voice when several groups aggregate together; and linking social capital connects citizen voices with government officials and others who can influence decision-making.

## 4. Measuring Social Capital

It is agreed that social capital cannot be measured directly but through proxy variables. These measurements can be done quantitatively, qualitatively, or the combination of both methodologies. Data need to be collected through intensive interview or questionnaire surveys and, or participatory methods with the objective to capture social capital comprehensively at the community level.

The Integrated Questionnaire for the Measurement of Social Capital (SC-IQ) and the Social Capital Assessment tool, both very notable social capital measurement tools were developed by the Social Capital Initiative under the World Bank. The SC-IQ covers the following themes and dimensions: (1) groups and networks; (2) trust and solidarity; (3) collective action and collaboration; (4) information and communication; (5) social cohesion and inclusion; and (6) empowerment and political action. The Social Capital Assessment Tools, on the other hand, is a multifaceted instrument designed to measure social capital at household, community and organizational levels. The tool is an integration of quantitative and qualitative (Grootaert, et al. 2003) measurements. For this study, data generated from responses of a survey questionnaire patterned after SC-IQ was utilized in order to gather inputs for analysis.

## 5. Data and Approach

The concept of cognitive social capital was explored by analyzing data from the survey conducted in the first quarter of 2017 for the PIDS-BUB project with the title Assessment of the Bottom-up Budgeting Program: Alleviating Poverty and Strengthening Social Capital. It consists of responses from 6,048 households represented by their identified household heads which were randomly selected from 62 LGUs in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. The 62 LGUs were selected using predetermined criteria from the list of 544 LGUs outside of ARMM and NCR that participated in the BUB starting FY 2013



– so called early BUB implementers. In the selection of the sample households, initially, two barangays were chosen from each of the sample LGUs with this ordered list: (i) the barangay which is the recipient of the most number of BUB projects implemented in 2013-2015; and (ii) the barangay which is the recipient of the least number of BUB projects implemented during the same period. In case there were several barangays with the most (or least) number of BUB projects, a simple random sample of one barangay was chosen. Subsequently, 50 sample households were randomly selected from each of the two-sample barangay using simple random sampling, with the list of households from the barangay as sampling frame.

For the study, data was processed only to present a general view of levels of cognitive social capital – generalized trust and solidarity. Data from identified sections of the SC-IQ patterned questionnaire used for the survey was processed to come up with data summaries of identified proxy indicators to measure the levels of cognitive solidarity in the communities under study.

## 6. Data Results and Discussion

### 6.1 Cognitive Social Capital – Generalized Trust

To describe the generalized trust aspect of cognitive social capital, the respondents were asked to rate (1 – lowest to 7 - highest) their opinions on groups of people pertaining to statements that can be attributed to trust. Table 1 below summarizes the results of the ratings given by the household respondents on statements representing trust for the identified groups of people. Overall, respondents gave high ratings (ratings of 5 to 7) for all the four groups based from the statements presented to them. When asked to rate on honesty (Are basically honest), high ratings were given to all groups with Barangay Officials and Provincial Officials having the most shares (21.2% and 21.0%) of respondents rating it the highest (rate of 7). The same two groups also got high shares of high rating of 7 when asked on trustworthiness (Are more trustworthy than others) and on looking out mainly for the welfare other than their own. It can be inferred in the results that people in the community tend to trust local authorities that are more accessible to them such as the Barangay Officials. The image projected by the Provincial Officials (i.e. governor, vice-governor, board member) as major development program implementers in the communities may explain the high ratings of trust attributed to them. On the other hand, the relatively low ratings given to City/Municipal Officials on the trust proxy indicators is yet to be explored.

In terms of the forms of social capital, it can be observed from the results that linking social capital is more prominent in the communities under study. More trust is given to barangay officials and provincial officials are higher than those of people in the community and city/municipal officials. Linking social capital helps increase communities’ access to key resources in formal institutions outside the community, including financial and technical support, capacity building and increased access to formal decision-making processes (Mercy Corps 2017). These relationships often connect communities with civil society organizations, government, service providers or the private sector.

Table 1 Summary of Generalized Trust Indicator Scores

Group	Statements/Ratings							Total
	1 (lowest)	2	3	4	5	6	7 (highest)	
	... are basically honest							
Most people in the community	0.7	3.9	6.0	12.3	36.3	25.9	15.0	100.0
Barangay officials	0.7	2.5	3.6	9.5	34.5	28.1	21.0	100.0

Group	Statements/Ratings							Total
	1 (lowest)	2	3	4	5	6	7 (highest)	
City/Municipal Officials	1.3	9.6	13.1	17.1	27.1	18.3	13.5	100.0
Provincial Officials	1.0	4.3	5.2	11.1	30.9	26.3	21.2	100.0
	... are more trustworthy than others							
Most people in the community	0.7	3.7	7.1	11.6	29.5	25.7	21.7	100.0
The barangay officials	0.7	2.4	3.4	9.7	32.1	27.9	23.9	100.0
City/Municipal Officials	1.3	11.1	13.9	17.8	27.7	16.1	12.0	100.0
Provincial Officials	1.1	2.6	4.4	8.9	27.7	27.6	27.6	100.0
	... look out mainly for the welfare of the community over their own							
Most people in the community	7.6	1.8	6.7	10.7	35.2	21.9	16.1	100.0
Barangay officials	7.3	1.3	3.0	9.8	36.4	24.5	17.7	100.0
City/Municipal Officials	7.4	8.7	11.5	17.1	29.1	16.0	10.2	100.0
Provincial Officials	8.5	1.4	3.1	7.6	32.5	24.6	22.3	100.0

## 6.2 Cognitive Social Capital - Solidarity

As mentioned above, the solidarity aspect of social capital refers to the extent to which people feel they can rely on relatives, neighbors, colleagues, acquaintances, key service providers and even strangers either to assist them or do no harm to them. From the data set, the solidarity aspect of social capital was measured using four proxy indicators related to the definition of solidarity. The proxy indicators are generated from questions referring to the following: (1) individuals/groups they think will assist if someone in the village is sick; (2) individuals/groups that is asked for financial assistance if a neighbor suffered from loss of income or source of income; (3) individuals/groups that will celebrate with them during festival times; and (4) individual/groups who will act as mediator if two people in the village had a dispute.

When asked on who comes in mind to assist if someone is sick in the village, more than half (57.04%) of the proportion of the respondents identified close relatives to come for assistance. This was followed by neighbors (24.66%) and barangay officials (9.40%). The inclusion of barangay officials as one of the first three to come in mind for assistance only shows the close ties that exist between the people the barangay officials and the people in the village.

Table 2 First mention on Who Respondents Think will assist if someone in the Village is Sick

Individuals/Groups	Number	%
Close relatives	3,441	57.04
Neighbors	1,488	24.66
Barangay official/s	567	9.40
Others	242	4.01
No one	97	1.61
Friends	88	1.46

Individuals/Groups	Number	%
Local government unit	81	1.34
The entire village	23	0.38
Community-based group/s	6	0.10
Total	6,033	100.00

A similar pattern was observed when the respondents who to ask for financial assistance if a neighbor suffer a loss of income or source of income. However, for this case, informal money lenders and microfinance institutions and rural banks came as sources of assistance with shares of 3.38%, 1.47% and 0.15% , respectively. It is also notable that the presence of the barangays officials are still prominent in this kind of situation with a share of 8.58% . This may also reflect the involvement of the lowest level of unit of governance in the lives of the people in the village.

Table 3 First mention on who respondents will ask for financial assistance if their neighbor suffered loss of income or source of income

Individual/Groups	Number	%
Close relatives	3,327	55.43
Neighbors	1,275	21.24
Barangay official/s	515	8.58
Informal money lender/s	203	3.38
Friends	198	3.30
No one	157	2.62
Local government unit	141	2.35
Microfinance institution/s	88	1.47
The entire village	41	0.68
Others	25	0.42
Community-based group/s	23	0.38
Rural bank	9	0.15
Total	6,002	100.00

During festival times, respondents tend to celebrate with their household (55.98%), relatives (18.91%) and the entire village (10.43%). It is also notable that during celebratory times, people also tend to reach villages other than where they live.

Table 4 First mention on who respondents celebrate with during festival times

Individuals/Groups	Number	%
Household members	3,253	55.98
With relatives	1,099	18.91
The entire village	606	10.43
Neighbors	528	9.09
Neighboring villages	203	3.49
Others	122	2.10
Total	5,811	100.00

On the other hand, when asked who do they think would resolve a dispute between two people in the community, most of the respondents claimed that these are either resolved through the mediation of Barangay Officials (38.47%) or just fix it among themselves (34.53%). The large proportion of respondents trusting barangay officials for mediation demonstrates the high regard given to these local leaders.

Table 5 First mention on who respondents think will resolve a dispute between two people in the community

Individuals/Groups	Number	%
Barangay Officials	2302	38.47
Among themselves	2066	34.53
Homeowners Association	127	2.12
Neighbors	896	14.97
Others	593	9.91
Total	5984	100.00

## 7. Summary

The social capital theory provides a lens through which governance outcomes may be understood. By normalizing trust and solidarity within a community (bonding social capital) and between groups (bridging social capital) and fostering relationships between themselves and decision-makers (linking social capital), these communities can build the skills, opportunities and confidence to act collectively, participate in decision-making and advocate for responsive accountable and transparent government. Results of data utilized for this study reveal that people in the community treat their local government officials (i.e. Barangay and Provincial Officials) with high regard, generally considering them worthy of their trust and as a source of assistance in times of need. Public trust in government and the strengthened solidarity are the aspects of social capital that can increase community participation in the development programs run by the government. Governments must be able to seriously demonstrate their responsibilities in order to gain public trust. Implementing government programs with transparency and accountability is one way to increase public trust in the government. Although it is generally understood that the presence of the state and the market erodes social capital (Fukuyama 2000), Arthurson, et al. (2014) has found that social capital is understood as a concept that can be used to guiding policy development and program delivery. Furthermore, the involvement of citizens in the planning and implementation of development programs will increase the sense of its ownership. This facilitates smooth implementation of effective projects, monitoring of activities for fair and sustainable results.

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