

# Assessment of Social Capital towards Civic Engagement: Difference between Pakistani and Chinese Youth

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## Abstract

*This research assesses the social capital towards civic engagement between Pakistani and Chinese youth by using the quantitative approach. Path relations were measured through Structural Equation Modelling to measure bonding, bridging social capital trust and civic engagement. The results indicate that there is a significant path relationship between bonding social capital and bridging social capital towards civic engagement between Pakistani and Chinese youth while path relationship trust towards civic engagement was found not significant in youth population of both countries. The impact of bonding and bridging social capital towards civic engagement has different patterns and degrees. Hence, both societies need different patterns of social development.*

**Keywords:** *Youth, Civic engagement, bonding social capital, Bridging social capital, Trust*

## Introduction

Apparently, the active citizens often assist the marginalized segment of the population through performing social activities within community and society. Currently, such trend is rarely found in developed societies. Therefore, class difference and social and economic inequalities take place instead of social development within society. Furthermore, class difference, as well as social and

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economic inequalities, are such factors that contribute to nurture deviant behaviour amongst masses and lead society toward dysfunctional, unbalance and social injustice. Unfortunately, poor performance of states' institutions and unfair social policies lead society towards deviant behaviours. Currently, deviant behaviour is emerging as culture in developing societies and helping to foster many social issues. There are many ways, which can be used to deal with social issues. However, participating and promoting culture of civic engagement in society is an appropriate way to deal with a number of social issues. Civic engagement can be defined as collective activism and different types of issues of society can be solved through collective activism (Camino & Zeldin, 2002). Engaging in social activities may vary on types of civic engagement, but more often, informal civic engagement related activities help to deal with issue of society by engaging people in voluntarism, donation and other types of informal civic engagement. To perform such types of social activities in society, it needs a social approach and such approach can be developed by socialization. The primary social institutions are major source of advocacy that can lead youth population to work out for the development of society. The collective approach nurtures attitude among people to take steps to work out for social development of society.

The active citizens are assumed primary source of development of society and they make a powerful social connection with people of the different occupations. Such social networks help individuals to link issues of community as well society with mainstream. Social networking can be divided into two types such as bridging and bonding. The Putnam (1993) described two basic types of social capital, bonding and bridging social capital. The bridging social capital can be defined as individual's social relationship with the different walks of life such as workmates, classmates and so on. A person or a group of people gets assistance from stranger and heterogeneous group of people and such assistance is considered a

bridging social capital of that person or group. Other one concept is 'bonding social capital', that can be defined as a person's strong social relationship with his/her family, friends and close contacts (Granovetter, 1973; Putnam, 1993). Bonding social capital is a potential source of an individual, which develops a strong relationship with In-group and community to deal with internal social issues. Thus, social capital is very important for homogenous group. However, the bridging social capital is a bit different as compared to bonding social capital in terms of usage. Bridging social capital links and brings people together from disparate groups. Bridging social capital assists individuals to resolve issues of society in broader perspective, and bonding social capital is beneficial for homogenous group as well as community to deal with issues at micro level. However, trust is a basic factor that facilitates people to act together for particular cause. Due to higher degree of trust among people, they may share their issues with one another and try to find out the solution.

As compared to bonding social capital, the bridging social capital is beneficial to link such issues of society. At a broader level, it helps to gather people from disparate group for collective action. Therefore, so many broader level issues of society can be dealt with by using bridging social capital. However, the major issue is that 'bridging social capital' is comparatively less beneficial than bonding social capital because of having no emotional, social and financial support. Therefore, the relationship of individual with society always remains weak. From a broader perspective, obtaining the consensus of people towards collective action to deal with the issue is very rare.

Thus, individual's weak relationship develops a lack of integration between the individual and society that creates lack of social cohesion among masses. Low social cohesion may nurture the attitude of people towards the decline of civic engagement. Keeping in view, this research aims to determine the difference between

young populations of two different societies by measuring the impact of bridging social capital, bonding social capital and trust towards civic engagement.

## Literature Review

### *Bonding Social Capital and Civic Engagement*

Bonding social capital is a very important resource for individuals to deal with their social issues (Besser, 2009; Granovetter, 1973). Bonding social capital can be defined as individual's close association or strong ties with neighbours, friends and members of family and Bonding social capital from homogeneity groups or people have the same social background (Haythornthwaite, 2002). In this context, Granovetter (1983) further coined that it is an intangible resource, and comes from the primary social institutions such as family, close friends and contacts.

Such primary relations of the individual make very strong and sustainable bonds and trustworthy social relations with individuals, that support to enhance well-being of In-group as compared to other social relations (Marschall & Stolle, 2004; Carrillo, Kawachi & Romani, 2019). Most often, in-groups are supported by homogenous group without any personal benefits. Therefore, informal civic engagement is very common in such relations.

Informal as well as formal civic engagement needs pro-social behaviour and filial self-efficacy in order to perform social activities. This process needs strong communication among masses. Positive behaviour of In-group towards social activities socializes youth to involve in civic engagement. The strong connection of an individual with family and homogenous group develops a strong and positive relationship to participate in social activities related to civic engagement within society (Duke, Skay, Pettingell & Borowsky, 2009). Such strong association between bonding ties and civic engagement make more possibilities for youth to engage in social

activities (Laghi, Palliani & Baumgartner, 2016). Pro-social behaviour and way of socialization of parents make more active citizens and their children as compared to other bridging ties as well as social capital (Besser, 2009). The previous studies revealed that bonding social capital has a significant relationship with civic engagement, but most of studies were conducted in the context of a particular society (Zhong, 2014) while the current study was designed to compare two different societies in context of Pakistan and China.

### *Bridging Social Capital and Civic Engagement*

It is not only debate in developing societies, but it is also part of developed societies that what type of model should be used to link issues of society with broader social order. Researchers are agreed that the gap is due to the decline of integration and cooperation among masses. This gap can be filled by enhancing culture of collective action (Gram, Daruwalla & Osrin, 2019). The basic issue is that cooperation requires sufficient links and integration between the different actors of society. Cooperation and integration can be built by performing social activities and such activities are the main source of activism that leads the masses towards common platform for achieving particular goals.

In the literature, there are two basic types of social activities, formal social activities and informal social activities. Informal social activities related to common ways to develop bridging social capital among masses (Berger, 2009; Putnam, 2001). The bridging social capital makes an easy way for actors of society in order to develop strong links among all sections of masses and create a platform for all active citizens to work together for social development. In the theoretical perspective; bridging social capital can be defined as a relationship of individual with people of the different walks of life in broader social order (Silva, Harpham, Tuan, Battolini, Epenny & Rhutty, 2006; Phulari, Khamitkar, Deshmukh, Bhalchandra, Lokhande & Shinde, 2010; Putnam, 2001).

Bridging social capital assists individuals to develop strong social contacts with different segments of society to deal with issues by taking collective action (Putnam, 2001). In the context of bridging social capital, Leonard (2004) argued that bridging social capital is an embedded social resource of individual that can be utilized by developing network of people in which different social groups and communities can be linked to solving the different issues of society. Such nexus of different groups of like-minded people and communities create space for civic activities in society. Engagements of people in different social activities create the culture of collective action among masses, which leads society towards sustainable development and welfare of the whole society. Due to links with different social networks as well as communities, bridging social capital is also beneficial for individual in the context of participating development of community (Paxton, 1999; Adell, 2003, 2001; Islam, 2019).

In western countries, it was also found that bridging social capital is not only associated with people through social networking, but it is also common in the religious network. Thus, the different religious networks had found to boost up civic related activities within the different communities (Lewis, MacGregor & Putnam, 2013). However, bonding social capital is more effective in order to increase social activities in communities as compared to bridging social capital while some previous studies pointed that bridging social capital has linked with civic engagement (Zhong, 2014; Besser, 2009). In the light of reported evidence from the previous literature, can be conceived that both variables' relationship depend on the pattern of social activities and exiting the social values of society.

### *Trust and Civic Engagement*

In decades, the assessment of association between trust and civic engagement has been seen central focus in social science research (Fukuyama, 1995; Misztal, 1996; Putnam, 1993; Wolfe, 1989;

Prochazka & Schweiger, 2019). In term of formal civic engagement, the Inglehart and Abramson(1999) pointed out that developed and developing societies are facing distrust towards performance of state institutions and such behaviour is leading masses toward distrust in political culture and democracy. The decline of political engagement among masses is a major threat for sustainable social environment that generates distrust between state institutions and masses (Miranti & Evans, 2019). Declining of trust among masses depends on the level informal and formal civic engagement among members of society (Pahl, 2019). The formal and informal civic engagement both are basic factors that generate opportunities for individuals to work out for social development society through collective action (Campbell & Kwak, 2010). According to Coleman (1990), relation between social activities and trust depend on reciprocity among members of society. The culture of joint work most often relies on the level of trust among citizens and informal civic engagement, which is a major factor for making people have social interaction in one other (Hall, 1992). In previous studies, it was identified that generalized trust and civic activities had significant positive relationship, mainly in kind of volunteerism related to civic activities across the world (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Buskens, 1998; Campbell & Kwak, 2010; Dekker & Broeck, 1998; Henderson, Brown & Pancer, 2012; Newton, 2001; Stolle, 1998; Stolle & Rochon, 1998).

## **Research Method**

### *Participants and Data collection procedure*

Youth population (15 to 30 years) from Pakistan and China was selected as respondents of the study. As per the nature of the study and characteristics of respondents, the different universities of both countries were selected as samples sites. For this purpose, four general Universities from Pakistan and four normal Universities from the People's Republic of China were selected as sample sites. For sample size, the first of all, total enrolments number was

obtained from the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan's official website (HEC) and website of ministry of education of China.

This study is based on the quantitative research approach, therefore; survey method was employed for data collection as majority of previous studies in this domain had used the same approach (Besser, 2009; Bobek, Zaff, Li & Lerner, 2009). The researcher collected data from Pakistan by personal visits while assistance was sought from Pakistani students, who have studied in different Universities of People's Republic of China. Total 1600 questionnaires were distributed among the students of different general and normal universities of both countries. After follow up, 431 questionnaires were received back from participants of Pakistan while 372 questionnaires received back from participants of People's Republic of China. The response rate was around 53.8% from Pakistan while 46.3 % from China. It is considered adequate for multivariate analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version, 21.0 was used for data cleaning and analysis. During data cleaning, it was observed that both datasets have missing values. According to the Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) the amounts of missing values is not a big issue but pattern of missing values must be checked out before dealing with the missing values. For this purpose, MCAR test was conducted to assess the pattern of missing values and amounts of missing values were reported quite low (Little, 1988). According to the Tabachnick & Fidell(2007) if data contains a low amount of missing values, in such condition, any types of technique can be applied to deal with the missing values. Missing values of datasets from both Pakistan and China was less than 5%, but it was accommodated after proper treatment.

*H1. There is significant difference between relationship bonding social capital to civic engagement between Pakistani and Chinese youth*

*H2. There is difference in relationship between bridging social capital and civic engagement between Pakistani and Chinese youth.*

*H3. There is significant difference trust and civic engagement between Pakistani and Chinese youth.*

## **Data Analysis**

*Civic engagement:* The items of this factor were adapted from the previous study (Bobek et al., 2009). Total items of civic engagement were eight, but some items did not load well, that is why CE3, CE6, CE9, and CE10 were dropped out from dataset. These items cover the informal aspect of civic engagement such as collecting money for needy, donation money and donating blood in order to save help patients, participating in volunteering, hosting any group or organization that works for development of community/ society and participating to make village, town and city clean.

*Bridging social capital:* The items of this sociological factor were adapted from the study of (Williams, 2006). Total items were ten, but due to low factor loading, five items were discarded. These items cover bridging social capital such as interacting with people; make them interested in different things; and make them feel being a part of the large community. As per interaction with people and develop new contacts outside of community, interacting with people's assistance to do something better for the community. All items of this factor were read on five points scale.

*Bonding social capital:* The items of this factor were also adapted from the previous study (William, 2006). This factor also contains ten items but due to low factor loading during the CFA, four items of this factor also were dropped out. Items cover such as help people they need, sharing community issues, getting help from other people to deal with the personal problem and so on.

*Trust:* The items of this factor were taken from the previous study (Glanville, Paxton, & Wang , 2015). Total items of this factor were

three. Items were read by using five points Likert scale. Items were like that most people could be trusted. Most people would try to take advantage of yours. If they got the chance and Most of the time people try to be helpful.

*Validity and reliability of research instrument:* The common definition of validity is that the amount to which a group of measuring indicators properly representing the primary theoretical constructs (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham, 2006). In the current study, convergent validity and discriminant validity were assessed. The convergent validity clarifies that the correlation between answers gained through different techniques presents familiarity among construct. The Henseler et al. (2014) defined convergent validity in the same perspective as a group of measuring items must signify one and the same basic construct that can be demonstrated by unidimensionality. In this study, the validity was measured by applying widely accepted technique 'average variance extracted(AVE)' (Hair et al., 2006; Henseler, 2012; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The same approach was given by Fornell & Larcker (1981) that attempts to read out the level of variance that a variable gained from its measuring indicators or items comparative to the amount because of exiting error. Table 1 pointed that AVE extracted for all variables found as greater than the basic threshold value 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), signifying that all variables of interest have potential to clarify greater than fifty percent of the variance to its measuring indicator on average.

In the current study, discriminant validity was also measured. It is not different from convergent validity and employs that two theoretically diverse variables must demonstrate in the different ways, for instance, the group of measuring indicators is likely not to be un-dimensional (Henseler, 2009, p. 299). In this study, the validity at variables level was measured by applying the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion, while discriminant validity can be measured at the items level through the cross-loading within factor loading by using

Chin (1998) criteria. According to the Fornell and Larcker criterion, square-root of AVE for each one factor must be the above the other variable's correlation with any other, mostly termed as an inter-variable correlation. Table 1 describes that there is no inter-variable correlation value was higher than the square root of the AVE. Therefore, on behalf of current results, it can be concluded that there is no discriminant validity related issue in current data.

The reliability is a basic assumption in the quantitative research and calculated individual item level by using Cronbach's alpha. However, the different researchers have recommended that it must also be examined on the construct level too ((Bagozzi & Fornell, 1982). In other words, factors level reliability ensured that items that designated to the same factors or constructs represents higher relationship with one another. In this stage, construct level reliability was examined by composite reliability. Here must be cleared that Cronbach's alpha examines the uni-dimensionality of multi-item scale's internal constancy (Cronhach, 1951) and composite reliability (similar to factor reliability) measured that how well factors were examined by its given construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table1 shows that there is no issue related to validity and reliability in current data(Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

*Table 1 Reliability and validity*

Factors	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	CEe	BSCc	BDSCe	TRTt
CEe	0.955	0.780	0.427	0.966	<b>0.883</b>			
BSCc	0.922	0.664	0.427	0.931	0.654***	<b>0.815</b>		
BDSCe	0.870	0.576	0.118	0.884	0.239**	0.344***	<b>0.759</b>	
TRTt	0.920	0.796	0.388	0.987	0.623***	0.578***	0.337***	<b>0.892</b>

**Note:** BSCc, Bonding social capital; BDSc, Bridging social capital; TRTt, Trust; CEe, Civic engagement.

*Hypothesis testing:* The results of AMOS points out that among the three paths in a present study, two components were found

significant in the purposed model in the Pakistani and Chinese youth context. While in an individual level, in Pakistan's context all paths were found positive and significant but in the context of China one path such as bridging social capital toward civic engagement was found insignificant.

Table 2. shows that there is a significant difference in path relations between bonding social capital and civic engagement among Pakistani and Chinese youth contexts. While in the individual level, this path in the context of China shows strong relationship with values of,  $\beta = 0.451$  (C.R=5.55)  $p$ -value= 0.00 as compared to Pakistan's youth context the path values such as  $\beta = 0.170$  (C.R=1.96)  $p$ -value=0.05.

In the model, the second path difference was measured between Pakistani and Chinese youth by linking their bridging social capital with civic engagement. Results reveal that there is a significant difference between path relationship in bridging social capital toward civic engagement in both Pakistani and Chinese youth context with values of  $\beta = -0.306$ ,  $p$ -value=0.00. At the individual level, this path in Pakistani youth context was strong with values of,  $\beta = 0.263$  (C.R 3.14),  $p$ -value=0.00 while this path relationship between two sociological factors in Chinese youth context identified negative relationship with the values of,  $\beta = .043$  (C.R-.631),  $p$ -value= 5.28.

*Table 2 Test of difference*

Path Name	China Beta	Pakistan Beta	Difference in Betas	P-Value for Difference	Decision
BSCc → CEe.	0.451***	0.170*	0.281	0.009	yes
BDSCe → CEe.	-0.043	0.263**	-0.306	0.005	yes
TRTt → CEe.	0.376***	0.285**	0.092	0.860	no

**Note:** BSCe, Bonding social capital; BDSC, Bridging social capital; TRTt, Trust; CEe, Civic engagement.

The last path difference trust toward civic engagement was evaluated between Pakistani and Chinese youth context. Results

reveal that there is no path difference between trust and civic engagement in Pakistani and Chinese youth context with the value of  $\beta=0.092$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.860$ . While at the individual level, relationship between trust and civic engagement was found positive and significant in both contexts. Relationship between trust and civic engagement was strong in the context of Chinese youth context with values of,  $\beta= 0.374$  (C.R 4.97)  $p\text{-value}=0.00$  while  $\beta=0.285$  (C.R 3.25),  $p\text{-value}=0.00$  recorded in Pakistani youth context.

Model fitness index: In the SEM approach, the model fit fitness index test is used to whether the tested model is suitable and appropriate. The model is acceptable and appropriate if the tested model fits its data. There is so many models fit indexes in the literature. In the CB-SEM, five model fit indexes are mostly reported in the literature such as Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), the Goodness-of-fit Index (GFI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and the  $\chi^2/df$  ratio (Ratio).

The literature suggested that model is considered fit in the data if the value of  $p\text{-value}$  of  $\chi^2$  is greater than 0.05, the amount of value SRMR is less than 0.08, the value of RMSEA is less than 0.05 and the CFI reports value higher than 0.90; and  $\chi^2/df$  ratio value comes up less than 3.0 (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010). However, Chi-square is quite a conservative in term of size of sample, particularly when the size of the sample is the above 200, the  $p\text{-value}$  tends to be .000 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 2005). The current study has more than 200 samples. Therefore, the value of Chi-square was ignored to interpret the result of the present study. In the SEM approach, test of model fit is quite important because statistics of model fit shows how good way a model predicts the hypothesized paths among the factors (Kline, 2015). Any proposed model is unacceptable or unsuitable if the model does not fit in the data (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010). Results of model show that CMIN is 2.711; CFI=0.962; SRMR=0.083 and RMSEA is 0.074, therefore, it is concluded that there is no such issue with the current model of fitness.

Fig.1 conceptual model, Pakistan

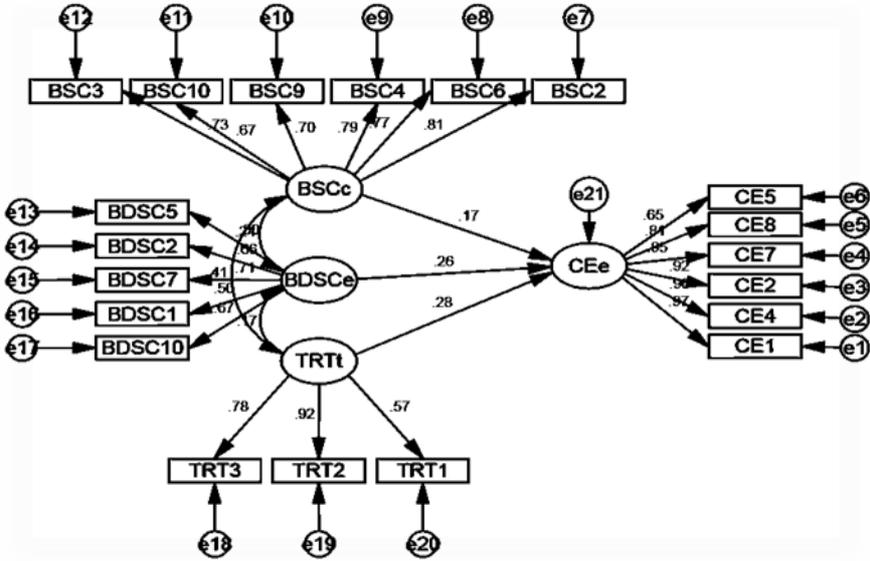
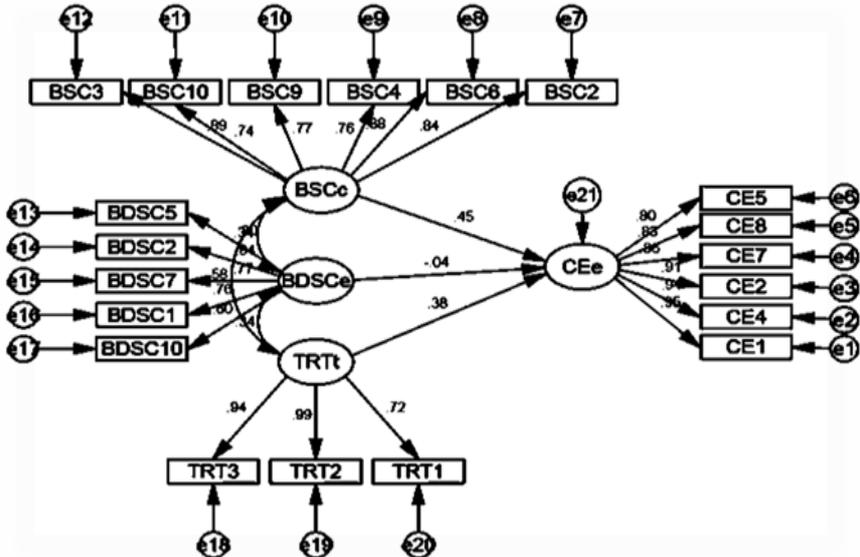


Fig. 2 Conceptual model, China



## Discussion

The results of the study impart that there is a significant relationship between bonding social capital and civic engagement in the context of Pakistan and China. Table 1 showed that association between these two factors was very strong. Result of the study is consistent with the previous study (Zhong, 2014). However, in terms of level of relationship, it was found higher in Chinese context than Pakistani context. The result of path difference in H1 indicates that there is a significant difference between bonding social capital and civic engagement in both societies. Therefore, it can easily be concluded that primary values in both societies are still very strong in the context of participation civic related activities in both societies. In the primary level, individuals have sufficient source of bonding social ties to work out for development of community (Geys & Murdoch, 2010; Lenzi, Vienno, Pastore & Santinello 2013; Zhong, 2014) while level of helps from primary institutions, such as members of family, friends and close contacts may depends on individual's social capital in particular social environment as well in society.

In the model of study, the second path relationship shows that there is no significant relationship between bridging social capital and civic engagement in China context while this path relationship was found strongly significant and positive in context of Pakistan. Result of path relationship in the context of Pakistan is consistent with the findings of previous study (Zhong, 2014). Similarly, partial relationship was identified between these factors in previous study (Larsen, Harlan, Bolin, Hackett, Hope, Kirby & Wolf, 2004). In the table 2 results showed that there is a significant difference between path relationship between bridging social capital and civic engagement in youth population of Pakistan and China.

In the current study, the third path difference was measured between trust and civic engagement. The result reveals that there is

no significant difference between trust and civic engagement in Pakistani and Chinese context of youth population. At the individual level, relationship between trust and civic engagement was stated as significant and positive in both contexts. Thus, at the individual and collective level, participation in social activities in both societies depend on the degree of trust among people. At the individual level, the result of this path is consistent with the previous study (Uslaner & Brown, 200), in which it was observed that community as well as local people had higher trust over one another as compared to other social strata. Close interaction and intimacy help to participate in social as well as structural development of community (Besser, 2009). Current study appraises that in both societies when a person steps up and work out for development of own community, he/she is supported by primary social institutions such as members of family, friends and neighbours in different kind of ways (Putnam, 2001; Ingen & Bekkers, 2015; Wiepking & Maas, 2009; Wilson & Musick, 1997).

## Conclusion

The present study concludes that the relationship between bonding social capital and trust towards civic engagement was seen as positive and significant. In addition, bridging social capital is not a predictor of civic engagement in the Chinese context. In Pakistani context, results show that bonding, bridging social capital and trust have positive and significant relationship. In context of path difference, table 2 points out two paths, bonding social capital and bridging social capital towards civic engagement were significant while trust towards civic engagement identified as insignificant relationship. Results of individual level as well as path differences point out that youth population of both countries are active to participate in the social development of society. However, in both societies, youth do not have approach to link their social activities to broader social order. The civil society of both countries may work to link youth population with broader social system.

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