Article

The Role of Social Capital in Enhancing Neighbourhood Security

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the connection between social capital and neighbourhood security as it relates to the Jordan society. It aims to investigate the role of social networks, trust, participating in social activities, and common norms in improving how their residents perceive safety and stability in the neighbourhoods they live in. The research design followed a descriptive-analytical approach that employed a structured questionnaire to a sample population of Emirati residents in order to estimate the levels of social capital and perceived neighbourhood security. The results show that there is a high correlation between social capital and neighbourhood security, which proves that the greater the social interactions, mutual trust, and community sense, the higher the safety and social cohesion levels. The informal social relations, engagement in community activities, and collaboration among the neighbours were identified to contribute a relatively high role in enhancing neighbourhood security. It also shows that there are differences in the perception of security depending on the chosen social and demographic factors. The study brings out the significance of enhancing the social capital as one of the mechanisms that can facilitate the neighbourhood safety and social stability in modern Emirati society. It highlights the necessity of the policy and community-driven programs that promote social engagement, developing trust, and shared responsibility. This study adds to the existing sociological knowledge about the social capital and can be useful to policymakers and city planners working on the improvement of the life of communities and sustainable social development in the Jordan by illuminating the social aspects of neighbourhood security.

Keywords: *Social Capital, Neighbourhood Security, Community Trust, Social Cohesion, University Students*

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Introduction

Over the past few decades, neighbourhood security has become one of the key issues in sociological

and urban analysis, especially in the societies where social, economic and spatial change rapidly occurs. (Shach-Pinsly & Ganor, 2021; Orlovskaya, 2020). Along with the existing systems of policing and supervision, recent research shows a rise of the significance of social interactions, group values, and community participation in the formation of the perceptions of safety and social stability (Bulutʿ & Akin, 2017; Van den Herrewegen, 2017). In this context, the notion of social capital has gained the centre of attention as one of the most crucial sociological constructs that can be used to explain how informal social systems are important in increasing the level of security in neighbourhoods and social cohesion (Galabuzi & Teelucksingh, 2010; Cramm et al., 2013; Wickes et al., 2019; Kurtenbach, 2 The term social capital is interpreted as a network of interconnections, mutual norms, trust and reciprocal obligations, with the help of which people and groups in a community can cooperate (Janssens, 2027; Murray, 2025; Travaglini, 2012). In sociological terms, one might theorize about the social capital as an informal process of social control, which is based on shared responsibility hence enhancing the ability of residents to respond to social danger (Wickes et al., 2017).

The nature of neighbourhoods in terms of social bonds, mutual trust, and active involvement is found to result in increased levels of informal surveillance, cooperation, and conflict management, which leads to decreased fear of crime and enhanced safety perceptions (Singh & Moody, J., 2022).

The association between social capital and neighbourhood security is a subject that has been heavily analysed in global literature with research findings showing that trust between neighbours, entry into community events as well as shared values play a significant role in creating safer and more harmonious living situations (Chong et al., 2017; Algarbawi & Barhoumi, 2023). Nevertheless, a significant part of this study has been held in the framework of the West or highly-urbanised settings, as little focus has been given to societies in the Arab region, where social setups are conditioned by unique cultural, family, and societal customs.

When applied to the Emirati society, neighbourhoods used to rely on high social ties, large families, and similarity in cultural values that ensure unity and sustainment. However, other processes, including

urban growth, population movements and altered social interaction patterns, have transformed the life of neighbourhoods (Shekfa & Ahmed, 2020). These changes bring some significant sociological questions about the level to which the traditional versions of social capital can still affect the security of the neighbourhood, and how the new versions of social interaction can affect the perceptions of the residents towards their safety.

Although these issues have become more relevant, there is a lack of empirical sociological studies that can explore the role of social capital in neighbourhood security in Emirati society. The current literature has tended to emphasise institutional security or individual perceptions of security, and little has been done on the social processes that make up the stability of neighbourhoods in general. This gap identifies the necessity of the study that places the problem of neighbourhood security in a more comprehensive sociological context, integrating structural and relational aspects of social life.

This paper, therefore, aims at discussing the connection between social capital and neighbourhood security in Emirati society by observing the major aspects of social capital such as trust, social networks, community participation and shared norms. Through the sociological approach, the study will help to build on the existing literature on social capital, besides providing context-sensitive information applicable to urban development and social policy in the Jordan. In this manner, the study highlights the need to develop social relationships and community integrations as critical elements of sustainable neighbourhood security and social well-being.

Problem

The concept of neighbourhood security has been traditionally theorized within the framework of formal processes, which include policing, surveillance, as well as urban design, however, recent sociological research prefigures the key role of informal social processes- trust, interpersonal relations, and community involvement- in defining the safety of a neighbourhood. Despite this paradigm shift empirical scholarship is still overweighted on institutional approaches, pushing the study of social capital into the background, in particular into non-Western contexts. In the Jordan, the traditional structure of neighbourhood life has been based on strong social interconnection and cultural mores; however the rapid movement of urbanisation and demographic mobility is changing these processes and this is accompanied by a risk to the social glue. Against the background of the dearth of empirical

research on the role of social capital in neighbourhood security within the Emirati society, a strong call is generated towards contextual sociological research, which can be utilized to complement community-based responses that can effectively supplement official security efforts.

Research Objectives

This study aims to examine the role of social capital in enhancing neighbourhood security within Emirati society. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Analyse the level of social capital among residents in Emirati neighbourhoods.
2. Examine residents' perceptions of neighbourhood security.
3. Investigate the relationship between social capital and neighbourhood security.
4. Identify the most influential dimensions of social capital (e.g. trust, social networks, social participation, shared norms) in shaping neighbourhood security.
5. Explore whether perceptions of neighbourhood security vary according to selected demographic and social characteristics.

Research Questions

To achieve these objectives, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What is the level of social capital among residents of Emirati neighbourhoods?
- How do residents perceive neighbourhood security within their local communities?
- Is there a statistically significant relationship between social capital and neighbourhood security?
- Which dimensions of social capital have the strongest influence on neighbourhood security?
- Do perceptions of neighbourhood security differ according to selected demographic and social variables?

Literature Review

Many works have been done on the importance of social capital in social life in general and especially on its role in bringing about social cohesion, security, and stability. Nevertheless, there exists scanty studies to examine the association between neighborhood security and social capital. This gap is felt

particularly at the local and regional levels. In this connection, the current research attempts to investigate this relationship and fill the research gap available.

One of the prominent researches in this field is that of Algarbawi and Barhoum (2023) that investigated the role of social networks in community security. The study was conducted using a qualitative research method which used a random sample of 25. According to the findings, neighborhoods were characterized by high level of security as the residents expressed that they felt a strong sense of belonging, freedom to exercise traditions and customs and safe to move freely without fear. This paper provides a stringent critique of seminal studies in this area such that the scope of scholarship in the field is vast.

In a seminal study by Forrest and Kearns (2001) on social cohesion and neighbourhood social capital, this paper presents a critique of these studies. It starts, firstly, briefly by exploring the thesis that modern societies are facing an unprecedented crisis of social cohesion, outlining the crucial dimensions that this construct is based on. These discoveries hold that neighbourhood social capital, particularly, trust and weak social tie does supplement social cohesion and perceived safety but it is ineffective in its own right to address aggregate structural inequities.

Lindström and Östergren (2003) examined the relationship between social capital and neighbourhood insecurity using data from the 1994 Malmö Public Health Survey in Sweden, which included a sample of 5,600 participants. The findings showed that social capital—measured through voting participation—accounted for approximately 7.2% of the variance in individuals' perceived neighbourhood insecurity, suggesting that social capital may partially explain feelings of insecurity at the neighbourhood level.

As presented by Baku et al. (2018), this paper offers a comprehensive review of urban neighbourhood security. The study, which employed a qualitative approach, found that urban neighbourhood security is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by social, economic, environmental, institutional, and political factors. Rapid urbanization, poverty, weak governance, inadequate infrastructure, and social fragmentation were identified as key drivers of insecurity, particularly in slums and informal settlements.

Methodology

Design

This study adopted a descriptive research method to examine the relationship between social capital and neighbourhood security in Emirati society. This approach is appropriate for investigating social phenomena by describing existing conditions and analysing relationships between key variables within their social context. The design enabled the study to assess levels of social capital and perceived neighbourhood security, as well as to examine the associations between these constructs.

Sample

The study population comprised residents of selected neighbourhoods in the Jordan. A probability sampling approach was employed to ensure adequate representation of the target population. 350 sample was collected from Jordanian university. The final sample size was determined to be sufficient for statistical analysis and for examining relationships between social capital and neighbourhood security. The demographic characteristics of the sample, including gender, age, educational level, and length of residence, were considered to ensure diversity and representativeness.

Table 1
Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	165	52
	Female	155	48
	Total	**350**	**100**
Age Group	20–30 years	70	22
	31–40 years	165	51
	41–50 years	85	27
	Total	**350**	**100**
Household Size	Less than 4 members	65	20
	5–8 members	187	58
	9–12 members	37	12
	More than 12 members	31	10
	Total	**350**	**100**

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Employment Sector	Government sector	201	63
	Private sector	103	32
	Self-employed	16	5
	Total	**350**	**100**
Household Income Level	Less than USD 500	72	22
	USD 500–1,000	159	50
	More than USD 1,		

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the study sample (N = 350), providing an overview of the key personal and socio-economic attributes of the respondents. In terms of gender distribution, the sample was relatively balanced, with males accounting for 52% and females 48%, which indicates adequate gender representation. With regard to age, the majority of respondents fell within the 31–40 age group (51%), followed by those aged 41–50 years (27%) and 20–30 years (22%). This distribution suggests that most participants were within the active working-age and family formation stages, which is relevant to the study's focus on neighbourhood security and social capital.

Regarding household characteristics, most respondents belonged to medium-sized households consisting of 5–8 members (58%), while smaller households with fewer than four members represented 20%, and larger households accounted for a smaller proportion. In terms of employment, the majority of participants were employed in the government sector (63%), compared to 32% in the private sector and 5% who were self-employed, reflecting relatively high levels of job stability among the sample. Concerning household income, half of the respondents reported a monthly income between USD 500 and 1,000 (50%), while 22% reported incomes below USD 500 and 28% reported incomes exceeding USD 1,001. Overall, the table indicates that the sample demonstrates a reasonable level of demographic, occupational, and economic diversity, supporting the suitability of the data for analysing the relationship between social capital and neighbourhood security.

Research Tool

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed for this study to measure social capital and neighbourhood security. Social capital was assessed through dimensions of interpersonal trust, social networks, community participation, and shared norms, while neighbourhood security was measured based on respondents' perceptions of safety and social stability. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Content validity was ensured through expert review, and internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha.

Table 2
Reliability Analysis of the Study Instrument (Cronbach's Alpha)

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Overall Questionnaire	25	0.98

The reliability analysis of the study instrument by the use of Cronbach alpha coefficient is provided in table 2. The total value of reliability was 0.98 which was an extremely high score of internal consistency among the items of the questionnaire. This finding validates that the instrument is very reliable and it is appropriate in measuring the constructs under study with high level of precision and consistency.

Data Collection

The approach used in data collection was questionnaires that were administered to the participants in their area of residence. The participants were explained about the aim of the study and guaranteed that their answers would not be disclosed to any third party and that they were only to be utilised to conduct academic research. The respondents engaged in the study were volunteers, and informed consent was signed before the study commenced.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed with the help of SPSS. The sample and study variables were described using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations), and Cronbach alpha was used to determine the reliability of the scale. The correlation coefficient used by Pearson was used to test the relationship between social capital and perceived neighbourhood security, and independent samples t-tests were used to test gender differences. The statistical significance was predetermined as 0.05 0.05.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics principles were adhered to during the research. The participants would not be identified, and no personal information would be gathered because their anonymity and confidentiality were ensured. The research was conducted with respect to ethical principles of conducting social research and no harm or risk was subjected to the participants.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistical analysis was carried out to investigate the level of social capital and perceived neighbourhood security of the study sample. Standard deviations and mean scores were used to establish overall trends on the perceptions of the respondents.

Table 3
Means and Standard Deviations of Items Related to Social Capital Levels among Al Ain University Students

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
4	Social values such as mutual respect and affection help strengthen relationships among students.	4.60	0.64	High
1	I have good relationships with my peers and members of the local community that enhance communication and mutual support.	4.52	0.61	High
2	I trust others at the university and within the local community and believe they adhere to social and ethical values.	4.34	0.92	High
5	I feel a sense of belonging to the community, and social relationships encourage cooperation and support for maintaining neighbourhood security.	4.16	1.13	High
3	I participate in student activities and community initiatives that contribute to strengthening belonging and neighbourhood security.	3.98	1.20	High
		4.25	**0.97**	**High**

Table 3 shows the standard deviations and the means of the items that measure social capital among students at Al Ain University. All the items registered high mean scores of 3.98-4.60, which indicates

that there is a high general level of social capital among the sample. The social values of mutual respect and affection were of the top rank (M = 4.60, SD = 0.64), then, there were positive relationships with peers and members of the local community (M = 4.52, SD = 0.61). Interpersonal trust, sense of community belonging and involvement in the student and community activities also scored high means.

The general average score (M = 4.25) proves that students have strong social relations, values, and community involvement which represent a positive social environment.

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations of Items Related to the Effect of Social Capital on Students' Perceived Neighbourhood Security

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
2	I feel safe at the university and in my residential surroundings while moving between buildings and roads.	4.46	0.61	High
1	Belonging to the student community and participating in university events strengthens social networks and enhances a sense of belonging.	4.20	0.78	High
3	I observe that peers and community members adhere to laws and social values, which enhances my sense of security.	4.16	1.00	High
5	I feel comfortable participating in student activities and community gatherings within the university and residential environment.	4.12	1.06	High
4	Strong relationships between students and community members help prevent unsafe behaviours.	4.08	1.28	High
		4.20	**0.67**	**High**

As Table 4 indicates, social capital significantly influences the perceived neighbourhood security of the students of Al Ain University in a positive way. The means of all the items were high (M = 4.084.46) which indicates that there is a high perceived safety in both the university setting and residential setting. The sense of safety in terms of movement between buildings and residential neighbourhoods was the top priority (M = 4.46, SD = 0.61), then there was the sense of belonging due to involvement in university actions (M = 4.20, SD = 0.78). The mean score (M = 4.20) proves that social capital plays the significant role of increasing the feelings of safety, trust and stability of students in the academic and residential environments.

Inferential Results

To address the inferential aspects of the study, the analysis relied on means and standard deviations, Pearson's correlation coefficient, and independent samples t-tests to examine relationships and differences related to social capital and perceived neighbourhood security.

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics of Students' Perceived Neighbourhood Security by Gender

Gender	Sample Size (N)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
Male	23	4.38	0.55	0.11
Female	27	4.04	0.73	0.14

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics of the perceived neighbourhood security by gender. The findings reveal a slight difference in favour of males indicating that male respondents were found to have a higher mean level of perceived neighbourhood security (M = 4.38, SD = 0.55) than the female respondents (M = 4.04, SD = 0.73). Descriptive statistics however do not provide enough information on the statistical significance of this difference and as such, an independent samples t-test was performed to test the relationship between whether the observed difference is statistically significant or not.

Table 6
Independent Samples t-Test Results for Gender Differences in Perceived Neighbourhood Security

Variance Assumption	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
Equal variances assumed	F = 1.158, Sig. = 0.287	1.827	48	0.074	0.33816	0.18507	−0.03395 to 0.71028

The results of the independent samples t-test analysing the gender difference in the perceived neighbourhood security are given in Table 6. The test of variance homogeneity (Levene) showed that the variance was equal (Sig. = 0.287 > 0.05); hence, the used assumption of equal variances was the row. The results of the t-test showed that there was no statistically significant difference between males and females (t (48) = 1.827, p = 0.074). Based on this, the null hypothesis was accepted thus showing that the perceived neighbourhood security is not significantly different by gender.

Discussion

The results show that the students have a very high level of social capital since mean scores in all the corresponding items are always high. The values of mutual respect, affection, good relationships with peers and members of the local community, involvement in student and community activities, social and ethical values in particular dimensions were especially noticeable. This implies that students are placed in powerful social systems that promote communication and collaboration, and support each other thus strengthening social cohesion in the university setup. This finding aligns with the results of Al-Gharbawi and Barhoum (2023), which demonstrated that residents feel a high level of security in their neighbourhoods and move around with ease and freedom.

The findings also indicate that the social capital among the students does not assume a unidimensional nature but an integrated set of relationships that include the trust in others, sharing of information and resources, community involvement, and a sense of belonging. This kind of multidimensional social capital helps students to relate with each other in a positive way with the university and the community around them, which adds to the favourable environment of cooperation and social solidarity.

These findings are consistent with the previous investigations of authors that have demonstrated that the higher the level of the social capital in the group of university students, the higher the social ties and involvement in the academic communities. The same outcome is also in accordance with the data provided by Forrest and Kearns (2001) that revealed that residents trust each other, have good social ties, and feel safe in their communities. Besides, it is established that social capital has a positive influence in the perceived neighbourhood security among students both in the university and residential environment.

The averages of all the security-related items are high and this shows that students have a positive perception about their safety as they move in between the university buildings and residential zones and also when they engage in academic and community activities. This favourable attitude towards the sense of security seems to be directly connected to the sense of belonging, confidence in others, and the conviction in the common social values among the students.

This finding is consistent with those of Forrest and Kearns (2001), who demonstrated that individuals have high levels of trust in one another, strong social ties, and a sense of security in their neighbourhoods. These findings contrast with those of Baku et al. (2018), who demonstrated that urban

neighbourhood security is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by social, economic, environmental, institutional, and political factors. Rapid urbanization, poverty, weak governance, and inadequate infrastructure were identified as contributing factors.

Good social contacts and community engagement offer a network of trust and support to the students increases the perception of safety and decreases the risk perception. The engagement in student affairs and other community programs also enhances the feeling of reassurance and stability that are added to a safer and more integrated campus and residential experience. These results indicate the complimentary nature of social capital in enhancing the security of neighbourhoods through the development of informal social control, cooperation, and collective responsibility.

Another implication of the results is that male and female students do not have statistically significant differences in their perceptions of neighbourhood security. This is an indication that gender is not a concluding factor in determination of perceptions of security in the university and residential environment. To the contrary, males and females seem to gain equally in their social capital to boost their feeling of security. This result highlights the critical role of social relations, community membership and student-related involvement as an essential factor in perceived security, without gender differences.

Generally, the results confirm the argument that social capital is an important social resource that enhances social cohesion and neighbourhood security perceptions in the university setting. Social capital helps to establish a stable, supportive, and secure environment through building trust, shared values and active participation from the students. These findings are consistent with the earlier empirical studies that have highlighted the importance of social capital in improving the sense of safety and belonging among the various social groups regardless of the demographic differences.

Conclusion

This paper has assessed the social capital and neighbourhood security among the Emirati people by means of liaising with the sample of students in Jordanian University by gleaning the importance of social ties, trust, and cooperative behaviours in determining the perception of safety in both a scholastic and residential setting. The results have shown that students have high rates of social capital, which is characterised with good social networks, trust in each other, similar values attached to them and active

participation in social activities. Such social resources were realised to play an important role towards increasing perceived neighbourhood security and perceptions of overall stability on the part of students. It is important to note that the effect of social capital on the perception of security was not dependent on gender i.e., it affects the students uniformly and thus it is an inclusive social tool that works across the board and not a gender factor.

Implications

The policy implications of the findings can be seen in terms of the need to improve social capital as an effective means of enhancing neighbourhood security and social cohesion in the context of universities and residential areas. Universities and pertinent bodies must focus on mustering the efforts that would help in promoting real socialisation, bonding, and trust among the students and strengthening the working relationship between educational institutions and local communities. Social cohesion, as well as the perception of safety, can be improved by incorporating them in to the programmes that encourage social values, civic responsibility and participation on a voluntary basis and through the provisions of supportive safety that permit unrestricted movement and community responsibility. Moreover, the direction of this investigation should be extended in future studies, to explore larger demographic and socio-economic markers, and to use longitudinal or comparative research designs to enhance the knowledge about the changes in social capital and its role in providing security in fast- changing societies. Collectively, they can help to create safer, more united, and socially-robust university communities in the Jordan.

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