

Titus Moono

**CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL CAPITAL**  
The case of Setlementti Louhela Ry in Järvenpää,  
Finland

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# ABSTRACT

Moono Titus: Civil society and social capital: The case of Setlementti Louhela Ry in Järvenpää, Finland.

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Social capital as a concept continues demanding recognition in social science studies and its presentation of the relationship with civil society and civic activities has been positive. However, Arising from that, this study explored people's perspectives of civic activities supporting their social capital. Drawing on theories of conceptualization and categorization of social capital into cognitive and structural, where cognitive social capital measures were generalised trust, reciprocity, and sense of belonging while, social contact and social participation were structural social capital measures, the concept was explored. Using Setlementti Louhela's 2018 survey data on their civic activities, a case study was conducted.

Overall, the results show that civic activities have a positive impact on social capital as perceived by all group service users. Frequency distribution of both cognitive and structural social capital show that over half of respondents in all the groups gave a positive indication towards the measures except for the Volunteer's group. The sample size comprised of more females (70.9%) than male (29.1%) participants in all groups and the age group above 63 accounted for the majority (60.6%) while those below 18 years were the lowest (1.8%). The implications of the finding on social capital and civic activities reinforce the relationship although it is still subject to theoretical approach. However, further research is needed that covers all age groups and genders equally.

**Keywords:** Civil society, social capital

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# 1 Introduction

Theoretically, social capital is positioned to offer insights into further knowledge into social relationships of various societies and communities. In addition, mainstream line of understanding this theory has been greatly associated with how social connections are formed. These networks enhance trust among individuals or groups resulting in positive change desired in society. Therefore, understanding the components that constitute social capital is essential to how it is applied. (Temple, 2009.)

According to Paraskevopoulos (2010), various concepts are connected to social capital and among them is civil society action. From his perspective, the link connecting social capital with civil society finds its roots in political discourse during the 17th and 18th centuries. Subsequently, it was revived in the 1990s. In his perspective, social capital is a human feature that is incorporated in society and is a product of deliberately coordinated measures between individuals or groups to provide aid among members of different communities. (Paraskevopoulos, 2010.) In addition, Paraskevopoulos (2010) views social capital as being formed through norms, organized conduct and the creation of networks that are communicated through different actors. Among the latter are civil society organizations. (Paraskevopoulos, 2010.) Hence, civil society organizations are vital players in both developing and enhancing social capital in various societies.

Social capital, as a concept has been viewed generally from the positive angle in many societies depicting many civil society organizations (CSO) engaged in community service to be excelling in promoting it (Lisakka, 2006). However, the possibility exists that social capital may foster negative forces that can be destructive to society. Lisakka (2006) believes it is inappropriate to assume that every civic activity performed is a

source of social capital (Lisakka, 2006.) Lisakka (2006) adds that possibilities for personal and community interests coming into conflict are inevitable and in such an instance, social networks may produce negative outcomes (Lisakka, 2006). A similar view is held by Fukuyana (2001) concerning the negative outcomes of social capital where he suggests that when a group or society possesses strong ties within themselves, it becomes hard to generally trust anyone outside that circle. In the worst cases, it may be the genesis for violence and other harmful acts in society (Fukuyana, 2001).

The development of social capital theory has been affiliated with the concept of civil society which has evolved overtime, beginning with the Aristotelian period, and has been associated with studies of politics and society in Europe (Ju, 2004). Although its definition has varied, it has nonetheless constantly been associated with both the social and political life of society encompassing mostly community service. It was during the Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th centuries that the term was popularized by scholars (Ju, 2004.). Following the concept's historical background, Ju (2004) suggests that civil society is a collection of elements that are intertwined hence both the state and civil society are required. He also suggests that for civil society to grow and stand the test of time political institutions which facilitate and provide for democratic dispensation at all levels for the benefit of citizens are necessary. (Ju, 2004.)

However, Harriss (2001) has a different perspective from Ju (2004) by viewing civil society as being composed of a collection of societies outside the jurisdictions of the state which are non-profit making. He argues that the core idea that defines a civil society is the mediating role it plays between individuals and the state (Harriss, 2001). Furthermore, he states that civil-society activities follow a pattern of logical action in the form of strong,

common connections and interests independent of the state or market. This view is supported by Boehnke (2015), who observed that civil society organizations generally focus their attention on the welfare of citizens of that society and try to solve social challenges that arise from in society (Boehnke, 2015). Civil society organizations (CSO) provide a range of community services and among those are skills and training that empower people to contribute positively to the affairs of society necessary for the growth of democracy.

The input obtained from people in civic activities can be seen as the foundation on which social capital grows. This follows Putnam's (1993) view of the theory as a form of asset which could be harnessed through involvement in community engagements, i.e., structural social capital, resulting in providing an opportunity required in enhancing cognitive social capital together both sense of belonging and trust (Putnam, 1993).

This study aims to investigate people's perceptions towards civic activities influencing their social capital as members of society of varying ages and gender. Based on a survey by Setlementti Louhela Ry, a civil society organization (NGO) in Finland, the study adopts a case study approach. The study focuses on cognitive and structural social capital and employs the conceptualization of social capital by Putnam (1993). The concept of social capital is explored from a community point of view through Setlementti Louhela Ry's civic activities. Drawing on the overall aim of the research, the research question is, **what are people's perceptions of civic activities influencing their social capital?**



## **2 Literature review**

This is a review of literature on social capital as a theory. It first gives an account of the theoretical development of the theory. The chapter continues with a presentation of the kinds of social capital that are popular, then a crucial review in the manner civil society and social capital are related focussing on structural and cognitive social capital. It ends with a review of social capital from Putnam's perspective, focussing on generalized trust and sources of trust.

### **2.1 Social capital theory**

Many scholars have contributed to the development of the theory, but credit must be given to the inputs of Pierre Bourdieu in his work 'The forms of capital' (1986), James Coleman in 'Social capital in the creation of human capital' (1988), and Robert Putnam in 'What makes democracy work'(1993) for introducing social capital into academic and policy debate. It is a complex and multifaceted concept encompassing human social components that promote economic and social development, hence, its definition remains contextual. Despite that, the emphasis is made by most definitions on the function of relations in benefiting both the individual and society. (Bhandari, 2009.)

Historically, the concept of social capital dates to the works of Max Weber and Durkheim (Portes, 1993). Yet, it was not until the 1980s that interest in the concept grew and since then, a significant amount of literature has been written concerning it. Among the early scholars of social capital was James Coleman (1990). (Portes, 1998). He posits that social capital should be understood from the perspective of its function because it does not exist in isolation but in different forms possessing more than one feature and "all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals

who are within the structure” (Coleman, 1990, p. 302).

Additionally, in Coleman’s (1990) view, social capital is a product that is found in human relations. In his analysis, social capital has three forms: reciprocity (including trust); modes of communication, including the manner information is relayed from one source to the other; and thirdly, norms of the community. Social capital is focused on specific activities instead of all activities in general, hence, he suggests that social capital is at first possessed or owned by a person, then it spreads to his/her social sphere (Coleman, 1990).

While Coleman’s (1990) concentration was the function of social capital, Putnam (1993) viewed social capital rather differently. He contended that social capital should be defined as “features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” (Putnam, 1993, p. 167). Following this definition, social capital implies relationships among people or social connections produced from collective norms of reciprocity and are complemented by trust. (Putnam, 2000, p. 18–19). He suggests that social connections contain value which affects relations, hence the productivity of individuals and groups. A practical example can be obtained from civic associations, whose rate of participation in their activities signal social capital. Participation in the programs of a civic association enhances collectiveness, exchange, and trust (Putnam, 2000). Hence, the theory can be conceptualized as a unique element that is shown in the form of social relationships, “primarily on the degree to which people associate regularly with one another in settings of relative equality, thus building up relations of trust and mutual reciprocity” (ibid.,p. 23).

Studies on social capital theory have risen in the past three decades extending beyond the spectrum of social sciences to other disciplines such as health. Among the three main schools of conceptualization of the theory, Putnam's (1995; 2000) conceptualization has taken precedence for its coverage of measuring reciprocity, social trust, and social participation. Putnam's conceptualization has gained significant popularity and evidence of positive results is available. Regardless of its success, it has been criticized for its unclear definitions and its validity as a construct (Portes, 1998).

While acknowledging the need to address these concerns, this study has adopted Putnam's conceptualization focusing on how the components are enhanced through civic activities. Portes (1998) observed that three aspects (social background, social capital itself, and results attributed to social capital) of social capital have been wrongly put together and utilized to form the description for social capital. The debate has continued with some scholars suggesting that trust and reciprocity should be considered either as antecedents or products of social capital (Portes, 1998). In contrast, through Putnam's inspiration, some researchers have opted to employ them as lone indicators of social capital when conducting an evaluation of the concept, while others have used them as elements of the cognitive social capital subconstruct (Harpham, 2008).

In this study I view trust and reciprocity as independent components of social capital because It cannot be assumed that if an individual possesses a trusting disposition, then s/he has a large social network, nor does one's engagement in social activities necessarily imply reciprocity. This view is shared by the work of Putnam (2000) and St John (2017). In Putnam's (2000) conceptualization of social capital, both reciprocity and trust are vital

cognitive aspects of social capital.

Furthermore, social capital is also seen to influence community activities where trust, reciprocity, and social networks are all elements of the theory. Therefore, the importance of promoting social capital is vital since different people and groups of varying backgrounds meet each other. This perspective is shared by various scholars. Among those, Manning (2015) observed that among the various perspectives of the concept, there is tilting in studies towards the social composition and actions that enable members of the group to participate (p. 27).

To some extent, this view is similar to Bhandari's (2009), who views social capital generally as a "collective asset in the form of shared norms, trust, networks, social relations, and institutions that facilitate cooperation and collective action for mutual benefits" (Bhandari, 2009, p. 27). Additionally, Bhandari (2009) suggests that among the vital elements that constitute social capital are social connections, standards in which exchange occurs, and trust. He argues that these components imply that social capital theory is collectively owned by firstly the person, and secondly, the groups who share the same characteristics hence contributing positively to the economic development of the country or community. (Bhandari, 2009.)

Another popular school on social capital is inspired by Bourdieu's (1986) work who defines social capital as "the sum of the actual or potential resources that are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition, in other words, to membership in a group" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). His definition emphasizes the benefits an individual

accumulates as a result of belonging to a social network. Additionally, he argues that social differences are part of social life and occur due to social capital and other resources. He submits that a relationship exists between social capital theory and economic capital theory. Furthermore, he contends that it is cardinal to test the cultural and ideological composition of social connections on top of acknowledging their existence. (Bourdieu, 1986).

His analysis links social class to social capital, analysing social capital taking a perspective view of social status. According to him, there is a relationship between these types of resources. His concept presented an understanding of the ways in which aspects of society such as inequality and social class manifest themselves in societies. Furthermore, Bourdieu (1986) suggested that social classes in communities are a product of uneven distribution of resources such as capital in three vital areas namely, culture, economy, and society. He viewed social capital as a resource attached to a system or network from which an individual can obtain benefits. Therefore, he contends that the amount of social capital one poses is directly proportional to his or her network size and the resources the network possesses (Bourdieu, 1986.)

Apart from scholars, the concept of social capital further caught the awareness of multinational cooperations, for instance, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank (WB) (Healy, 2004). The OECD's definition has been accepted in many parts of the world and has seen scholars employing it in their research. For instance, in some studies conducted in the United Kingdom and Australia, researchers relied on the OECD definition when establishing their model (Lisakka, 2006.) The OECD defined social capital to comprise “networks together with shared

norms, values, and understandings that facilitate cooperation within or among groups” (Healy, 2001, p. 41). The perspective taken by the World Bank about social capital is wider incorporating other establishments that are keenly involved in community activities (Lisakka, 2006). The definition states that “Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society’s social interactions... Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together” (Lisakka, 2006, p. 9).

### **2.1.1 Types of social capital**

Several scholars have suggested that social capital is in more than one form. Despite a variety of the kinds of social capital found in written works, structural and cognitive social capital are the most popular types. According to Uphoff (2000) cited in (Grootaert, 2002) structural social capital implies moderately unbiased outwardly and noticeable social construction, for instance systems, relations, organizations, and the codes of conduct that govern them. Practical examples are Parent Teachers committees, sports and fitness groups and community groupings (Grootaert, 2002).

Subsequently, Uphoff (2000) views cognitive social capital to encompass primarily a subjective perspective in form of nonvisible aspects such as behaviours, rules, beliefs, mutuality and faith. (Grootaert, 2002). Under these two main branches, further categorization has been done. Scholars (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 2001) in their work suggest three categories of social capital which are linking, bonding and bridging, and social capital as one group. Strong and weak social capital, horizontal and vertical social capital. (Bhandari, 2009.) Additionally, he further states that bonding social capital is characterized by close relations between individuals due to friendship, family relations, or faith. While, when relations are loose

or distant, such as colleagues and classmates, the form of social capital found is referred to as bridging social. Subsequently, regarding linking social capital, he characterized it by the difference in social status among two individuals or networks. His view is that, when one is higher in some form of power than the other, then the form of social capital connecting them is linking social capital. (Bhandari, 2009.)

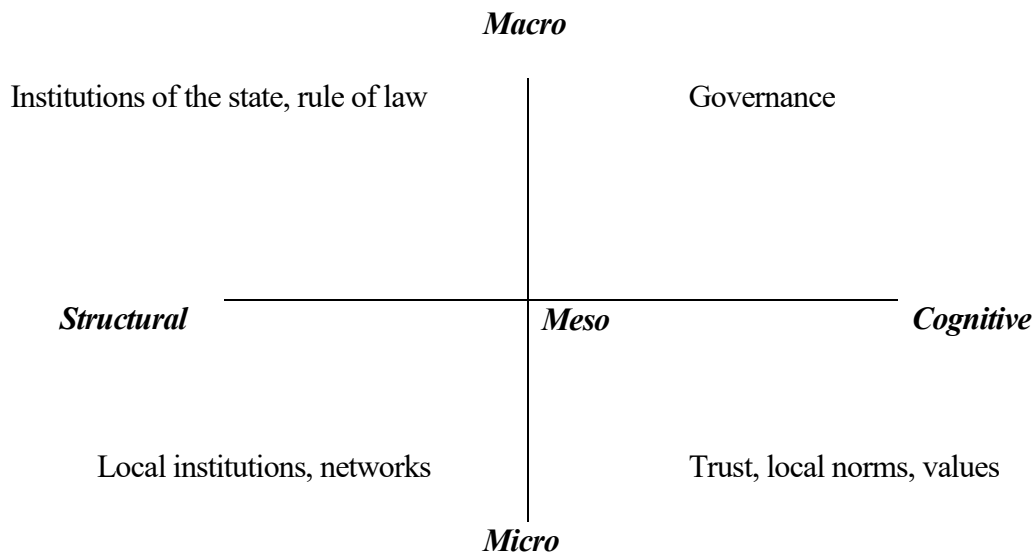
Having close tight relations such as family serves as a form of bonding social capital while relations with colleagues may help one enlarge their professional network. Subsequently, linking social capital helps institutions connect to larger institutions such as the state. (Bhandari, 2009.) Additionally, social capital is classified according to the tightness of social relations. (Granovetter, 1985.) Close or tight relations are those which are binding such as family and close friends while weak ties imply those which are casual in nature and temporal and occur among people from varying social groups and backgrounds (Granovetter, 1985). Unlike weak ties, strong ties are a product of emotional affection, desire to assist, and greatly from close relations. Additionally, strong ties provide a deeper sense of care on a personal level whereas weak ties are usually sources of informational support, and such, they connect individuals to a wider range of communities whose role is an information source. (Erickson, 2004.)

The third categorization of social capital is informed by the lateral connections of members of the community of the same strata (horizontal networks) and relations between people of varying pecking orders (vertical networks). The main feature that differentiates horizontal social capital from vertical social capital is that the first works with social standards such as beliefs and principles while the latter is associated with official layers of authority. Similar to bridging and bonding, vertical and horizontal social capital involves different members of

society intending to enhance their social interactions resulting in participation in community activities. Additionally, it provides a connection between leaders of both the community and higher authority such as the state rendering social development to occur which are informed by policies and regulations. (Bhandari, 2009.)

Despite the variations found in structural and cognitive social capital, each form complements the other and can exist independently. For instance, state-run organizations serve as avenues for structural social capital while social relations are cemented on other grounds such as trust in the absence of formal structures. (Grootaert, 2002.) He adds that another component that has facilitated the possibility to distinguish the characteristics of the two forms of social capital is the scope of elements under study. These elements can be observed at various levels which are lower (micro), medium (meso), and high (macro) levels. Under the lower or micro level, horizontal connections are examined which are in form of associations an individual has with others and how values and norms are represented in the networks. The meso or medium level of observation takes account of both horizontal and vertical connections between factions while the high or macro-level views social capital at the organizational or state level. The relationship of the form of social capital is illustrated below. (Grootaert, 2002.)





*Figure 1. Types of social capital*

Source: *Adapted from Grootaert (2002 p. 18)*

According to Narayan (1999) and Woolcock (2000), bonding social capital implies horizontal close relations between persons or groups in a similar community. Examples of bonding social capital are relations of close family, relatives, and neighbours. This branch of social capital received critique as it has been viewed to pose a high risk of fuelling exclusion, thereby producing negative results in society. (Narayan, 1999).

The other form is referred to as bridging and linking social capital which, covers varying groups of people or individuals. Linking is sometimes called vertical social capital due to its characteristic of relations of differences in power (Narayan, 1999). Due to its ability to minimize inequalities by supporting crossing social groups and providing a sense of responsibility, it has been deemed relevant (Szreter, 2002). Despite these differences in these forms of social capital, distinguishing them empirically has remained a debatable issue among various scholars (Szreter, 2002).

### **2.1.2 Structural and cognitive social capital**

Both types of social capital are associated with social connections and other forms of social interactions for instance “associations, clubs, cultural groups, and institutions supplemented by the rules, procedures, and precedents that govern them” (Bhandari, 2009, p 20). Cognitive social capital is mainly made up of principles, perspectives, beliefs, trust and reciprocity as shared norms (Uphoff, 2000). It is mostly about the feelings and thoughts of people rather than what they do. Usually, others refer to this as ‘the less tangible’ area of social capital. (Kawachi, 2008.) It encompasses aspects such as values and opinions people have about their social life hence social trust and rules or norms in which social exchange occurs or reciprocity are key elements. Cognitive social capital is assumed to capture the foundation for social relations, a disposition towards social life and cooperation within social networks. (Harpham, 2008.) On the other hand, consistent with Putnam’s (2000) conception, it is also assumed to be a result of social life, an effect of social integration into a network. As both causes and effects of social life, cognitive and network-based social capital are assumed to mutually reinforce each other. Together, these two forms are assumed to constitute the social capital construct as two sides of the same concept. (Bhandari, 2009.)

Whereas structural social capital is mainly about means of mutual benefits through “roles and durable social networks supplemented by rules, procedures, and precedents” (Bhandari 2009, p 20). Harpham (2008), views structural social capital as a collection of activities performed by an individual in a social network. For instance, social events participation which is informal (e.g., with family, neighbours, friends and workmates), social club memberships and volunteering in civic activities. (Harpham, 2008.) Putnam (1993) contends that membership and taking part in community events of social nature

or organizations freely are the basis of community togetherness which fosters trust and community responsibility in individuals (Putnam, 1993).

Also, it enhances the growth of the community and spreads trust. In this view, social capital is believed to both networks based or structural and cognitive in nature (Paxton, 2002.) The two forms are attached to each other and complement one another in turn. The downside of this relationship of cognitive and structural social capital falls during measuring either of the two, hence it is always encouraged to have them both. (Uphoff, 2000.)

## **2.2 Social capital concept according to Putnam**

In Putnam's (1993) book, 'Making Democracy work', he stated that his purpose was to draw theoretical understanding of social capital while his method was empirical (Putnam, 1993). In this study, the influence of civic activities on people's social capital is being investigated hence the focus is his theoretical findings focussing specifically on relation to civil society activities. Among the main findings of his study in Italy were the variations on how governmental reforms performed between Northern and Southern Italy. The Northern Italian side performed highly positive while the Southern underperformed. The success in the Southern was greatly attributed to "civic community". (Putnam, 1993.)

He noted that where municipalities operated smoothly, there was economic growth and there was active participation from the community through social networks, political will and active citizenship driven by respect and trust for one another (Putnam, 1993). Civic community activities played a pivotal area in the success of municipalities and their

economies and he measured them through activities such as “voting, reading of newspapers, and participation in sports clubs and voluntary cultural associations” (Siisänen 2003, p. 3).

Putnam (1993), in his study, reported the following findings between the two regions. He found that the North region exhibited a horizontal display of social capital. In contrast, the South displayed a vertical form. The North displayed a high level of togetherness, cooperation, respect, solidarity, trust and civic commitment while the South, he put it this way, “The chief virtue in the South, by contrast, was the imposition of hierarchy and order on latent anarchy” (Putnam 1993, p. 130). The variations between the two regions in terms of social structures, community participation and organization resulted in a negative impact politically. “In the North, people were citizens, in the South they were subjects” (p. 121). He argued that the composition of civil society predetermined the development of the region both economically and politically in the long run and he referred to it as ‘path dependence’ “where you can get to depend on where you are coming from, and some destinations you simply cannot get to from here” (p. 179).

Social capital as a concept shows the importance of community cooperation. It shows that communities can solve social challenges through community action in form of voluntary organizations hence foster development (Siisänen, 2003). Furthermore, social capital is constituted from common attributes of the community comprising trust, norms and social networks (Siisänen, 2003).

### **2.2.1 Generalized trust**

There are several types of trust in literature but in this study, I refer to what is known as "generalized trust". According to Newton (1999), he states that this is trust driven by the desire for a reward through positive contribution to the community without any motive of self-recognition (Newton, 1999). Siisianen (2003) observed that mature and developed societies require appreciation of freedom of social interaction for people of different backgrounds and generalized trust is the foundation. It is the platform where reciprocity and social networks or interactions occur for any community to meet long-term needs. (Siisianen, 2003.)

Eventually, trust is created from these two factors hence the connection is that reciprocity and freedom of interaction are products of trust (Putnam, 1993). According to Coleman, (1988) social capital grows when it is applied (Coleman, 1988). Furthermore, when a society attains social balance, the evidence is seen through increased cohesion, growth in trust, strengthened reciprocity, strong public participation, and enhanced well-being (Putnam, 1993). Additionally, he suggested that social trust is a result of two elements, standards in which mutual social exchange occurs and connections arising from community participation. (Putnam, 1993).

### **2.2.2 Sources of trust**

According to Putnam, he suggests that voluntary associations are sources of trust in his concept. He suggests that voluntary groups or associations affect the relationships of members and the extent to which they work together (Putnam, 1993). Additionally, voluntary associations benefit members in any form of matter hence enhancing the exchange of customs, trust and usher future social development for the members and

community at large (Putnam, 1993).

However, Siisianen (2003) notes that Putnam's (1993) concept suffers a defect as it suggests that voluntary associations equate to the whole concept of civil society which lacks merit. He argues that Putnam's concept of social capital is more inclined towards the conservation of notions about the school of integration focussing mainly on the ways and models that enhance integration in society. He views the concept to inquire on the underlying factors that drive the values on which reciprocity, norms, and social networks are founded which eventually result in cooperation and unity in society. Subsequently, the development of society in various avenues is achieved. (Siisianen, 2003.)

### **3 Civil society**

Chapter three is about the development of civil society in Finland. I give a broad overview of the kinds of civil society groups and their roles in society. I then focus on Setlementti Louhela as it is the center of the study. I provide detailed information on why the organization provides an ideal setup for such a study. I conclude with a general overview of the relationship linking civil society to the concept of social capital.

#### **3.1 Civil society in Finland**

Among the unique features, citizens of Nordic countries possess are with regard to their relentless involvement in voluntary organizations since time immemorial. This has led to their top achievements in the area of social capital such as trust and participation in various associations. Participating in voluntary groups of different kinds plays a vital role in Nordic countries. It is from this background that their countries are founded and because some of these organizations are sponsored by the government, their role is vital in promoting the welfare of the citizen both socially and health-wise. Unlike other countries, in the Nordic countries, the state and civil society work in harmony. (Cepel, 2012.)

On average, an adult Finn was a member and actively participated in two civil society organizations in the mid-1990s. Therefore, there was a great need to invest in the public sector which called for values of democracy, equality and social justice. These elements provided an ideal environment that facilitates the development of civil society in Finland. (Seppo, 2013.)

As earlier stated in the preamble, the concept of civil society finds its roots during the

Enlightening period of the 18th century. In Finland, the advancement of CSO dates to the 19th century and it is associated with missionary work. At the time of the civil war in 1918, the population was split into two. The right-wing government of the 1930s did not favor most CSO which favored the left-wing hence they became inactive. (Seppo, 2013.)

The reverse happened after the 1940 war to the conservatives when the left-wing formed government. As the country experienced growth of its welfare state, the involvement of civil society activities expanded both locally and internationally. Systems were eventually created that promoted the efficiency of CSO through structural, financial, and regulatory professional avenues in the 1970s. By 1980, CSOs became actively involved in supporting the state in the provision of services as it was unable to meet the demand. Additionally, CSOs experienced some transition as they became less politically attached in their activities. During that phase, more organizations came into existence with new forms of activities. There was a change in funding as well from yearly subsidies to grants. (Seppo, 2013.)

During the recession in the 1990s, the state was further placed in a tight position which resulted in the implementation of reducing funding to the ministry of social and health services. That resulted in increased pressure on CSOs to both assist the state and produce the services. There are 135 000 registered associations in Finland and about 70,000 are considered operational. In addition, an estimated 20 000 to 30 000 associations are unregistered according to the Register of Associations. Considering the population size of the country, and in comparison, with international levels, the number is large. The reasons attached to this phenomenon are connected to the history of the country's administrative culture which has roots in the Russian tsarism that preferred institutions that obliged with

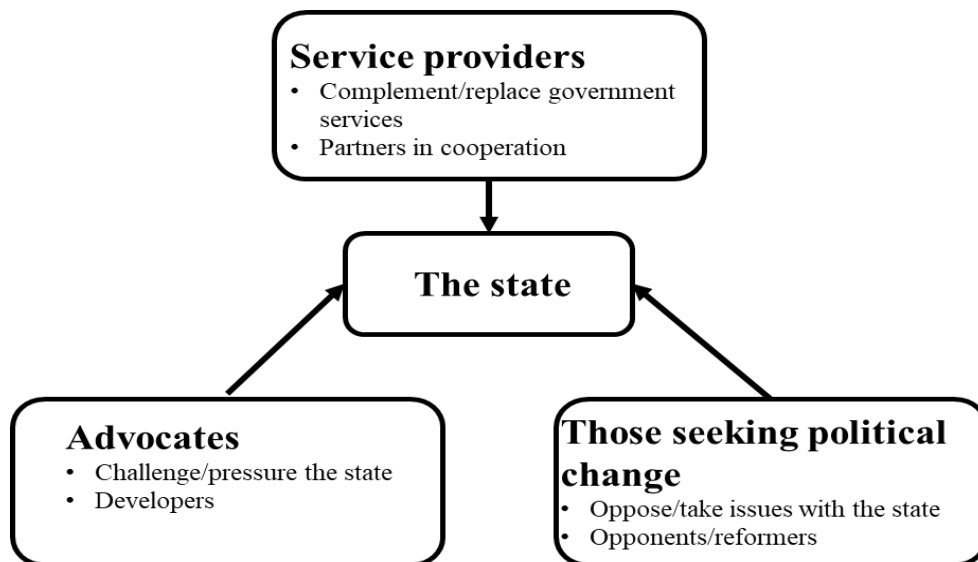


the rules. Secondly, civil society organizations were instrumental in creating the Finnish image of togetherness and success was attained through voluntary associations. The role civil society organizations play in Finland is vital as memberships enhance social capital through the participation and creation of networks required for the smooth running of society. (Seppo, 2013.)

Three main groups of civil society organizations have been distinguished in Finland. The first group is characterized by elements of producing services to supplement where the state is unable or has been insufficient. Their work is in form of care provision for the elderly, voluntary services, and services for people with special needs. The second group is advocacy-oriented and characterized by membership comprising of professionals. They operate at the local level as interest groups and higher levels such as federations of trade unions. The last group is more politically inclined hence their features include activities targeted at political change. In this study, the organization under the case study belongs to the first group. (Seppo, 2013.)

The Services Centre for Development Cooperation (Kepa) which has since merged with another organization and are now called Finnish Development NGOs (Fingo) views civil society organizations in form of an environment in which members of society exchange and share their concerns about their society (Harju, 2003). This view supports the notion that, social capital has been attached to community groups and associations. Following Putnam's (1993) school of thought, measuring social capital has typically been conducted at the civil society level. In his view, "those features of social organization such as trust, norms, networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" make up social capital. (Putnam, 1993, p. 167). He further argues that

participation in informal networks and voluntary organizations become the foundation for community collaboration, unity and community development (Putnam, 1993). Below is a figure that depicts the relationship between CSOs and the state in Finland according to Kepa. (Seppo, 2013.)



*Figure 2. Relationship between civil society organizations and the state*

*Source: Adopted from Seppo (2013, p. 8.)*

### **3.2 Types of civil society organizations in Finland**

In the Finnish context, civil society groups are classified according to the activities they are engaged in and level of development. In the introduction, it has been stated that there are three main classifications of CSOs predominant in Finland. Within the three categories, the following CSOs can be identified in accordance with their activities. They include community action, administrative action, faith-based action and others. (Seppo, 2013.)

#### **3.2.1 Civic and organizational activities**

The civic and organizational activities comprise the highest in number and are the

backbone of civil society in Finland. In Harju's (2003)'s view, the actions performed and targeted towards the development of the community as a whole in collaboration with them can be described as civic activities. The activities are characterized by actors who are active and committed to defined results. Additionally, the scope of activities transcends beyond one's usual social circles such as family and work colleagues. The actions are community-oriented, working together to better the community with other community members. The results of such efforts are beneficial both individually as well as communal hence the concept of civic activities incorporates community. CSOs are the main places of civic action in Finland and generally any other society. (Seppo, 2013.)

### **3.2.2 Religious organizations and civil society**

Officially, there is a distinction between the state and the church in Finland. CSOs affiliated with two main churches (Lutheran and Orthodox) possess unique attributes and their community work activities are not considered part of the Finnish civil society. Other congregations operate through associations such as the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) and Young Men Christian Association (YMCA) and many others depending on the church. (Seppo, 2013). According to Norris (2011), he suggests that from Putnam's social capital theory, two distinct views can be deduced. Firstly, a direct link connecting social capital and civic society exists which fosters involvement both politically and in community development. Secondly, "Civic engagement" can be deduced from the theory which encompasses a range of actions such as selecting leaders democratically to complex forms of actions. Just like in the USA, religious organizations were credited for fostering civic participation by members of the community activities and this view was supported by other scholars too found a relationship between church and civic engagement. (Norris, 2011.)

### **3.3 Civil society and social capital**

According to Ju (2006), social capital exists threefold. Firstly, a form of community engagement, secondly, as a space attached to, yet independent from financial systems, government, and non-governmental space, and thirdly as the main center of an independent entity (p. 68). This perspective implies that civil society is a collection of elements that are intertwined hence both the state and civil society are required. He suggests that for civil society to grow to its fullest potential presently and in the future, it requires input from state machinery through the various ministries that bring all people together. (Ju, 2006.)

Harriss (2001) has a different take from Ju (2006) by defining civil society to be composed of a collection of societies outside the jurisdictions of the state and are non-profit making. The core idea that defines a civil society is the mediating role it plays between individuals and the state (Harriss, 2001). Also, civil-society activities follow a pattern of logical action in form of strong, common connections and interests independent of the state or market interests. The focus of civil society organizations has generally been towards the welfare of citizens of that society, attention has as well risen in the negative effects that arise from them. (Boehnke, 2015.)

Harris (2001) suggests that the roles of the state and civil society are cardinal elements when pursuing democracy. He states that civil society organizations (CSO) provide a range of community services and among those are skills and training that empower citizens to participate in the affairs of society necessary to foster long-term growth and renders an ideal environment for democratic dispensation. He contends that people's participation in civil society hence becomes the foundation for social capital and the effectiveness of any given

society is enhanced by agreed customs, networks and organizations such as civil society and the state. (Harriss, 2001.) Jaysawal (2013) simply put it this way, civil society relies primarily on the participation of the people and hence thrives to fight against social exclusion. The implications of such actions result in the characteristics of social capital give existence and purpose for civil society organizations. (Jaysawal, 2013.)



*Figure 3. Civil society, community and social capital relationship*

Source: *Adopted from Jaysawal, (2013, p. 103.)*

Jaysawal (2013), formulated the figure above to illustrate the association of individuals, community, civil society and social capital. He suggests that when a person participates in community activities, the process becomes the genesis for social capital. Through that process, elements of social capital come into play resulting in the formation of civil society. Some civil society organizations are formed in that manner. In his conclusion, he states that there is a tight connection which marries civil society to social capital. Even though the article does not explicitly state the analysis methodology employed during the case studies, what it gives is a perspective on the interconnection of civil society and social capital. (Jaysawal, 2013.)

Civil society organizations are vital components of society. They are located between the intermediary section of society and are expected to strengthen the developmental efforts of the governments of the day. They are “schools of democracy; they develop virtues like solidarity and participation among citizens and socialize active individuals into community members” (Karolewski 2006, p. 169). Setlementti Louhela is a civil society organization whose purpose is to strengthen and create communities where interaction and sharing of everyday life experiences are enhanced. Through these activities, the organization aims to foster the social capital of the people in the area of operation. (Setlementti Louhela, 2019.)

This study explores the concept of social capital from a general perspective. Following the three main scholars recognized for the advancement and popularization of the theoretical knowledge of social capital, Putnam’s (1995; 1998; 2000) conceptualization has significantly been more influential than the other two. He viewed the concept from an angle of results of informal connections, standards of mutual social exchange, and reliability motivated the inclusion of trust and reciprocity as components required to measure social capital. The inclusion of confidence and mutual exchange has provided the cognitive aspect or at least an indicator of it in social capital. Its, therefore, cardinal that cognitive and structural social capital measures are evaluated together following the construct (Putnam, 2000.) By following the three main categorizations of social capital namely, macro, meso and micro, the study is concentrated on the micro-level also referred to as the communitarian level. The micro-level is composed of the structural and cognitive social capital. (Grootaert, 2002.)

### **3.4 Settlementti Louhela**

Settlementti Louhela Ry is a civil society organization that is neither faith-based nor profit-making organization. It has no political ties and was founded in 1945 by Settlementti Louhela Ry and Louhelan juhla and pitopalvelu Oy whose focus is providing catering services to the community (settlementti louhela, 2019.) The organization's objective is to be a platform that enhances community development and social networks. Their services are centred around human development hence service users benefit from social interactions and personal growth. Additionally, activities are aimed at fostering a positive approach towards the community where the main players are the people themselves. Settlementti Louhela Ry is a member of the International Settlement movement that is spread all around the world. Two core policy directions govern the organization's activities. Firstly, assisting people to find meaningful participation in community activities thus creating chances for personal empowerment leading to accountability. Secondly, formulating educational and social needs-based services that are informed by the community. Under the Civic Action department, there are four units. These are Multicultural work, Living room (Olohuone) Action, Voluntary work, People with special needs services (Settlementti louhela, 2019.)

#### **3.4.1 Living room action**

There are three living rooms organized and run by Settlementti Louhela Ry. They are the Rinkula Living room, Jampa Living room and one which is located and collaborates with Nurmijärvi tobacco flea located in Nurmijärvi. living rooms are open places arranged for social interaction of people from various walks of life. A variety of activities are arranged for the patrons which include music, crafts, exercise, and literature. Usually, activities are built on the needs and wishes of the participants. Settlementti Louhela's Living rooms

are members of the bigger network of Living rooms in the capital region of Finland. The Living rooms network maintains cooperation's between organizations and municipalities. (Setlementti louhela, 2019.)

### **3.4.2 Multicultural work**

Settlement Louhela's multicultural work involves creating an environment where immigrants and native Finns learn to belong to one community. There are several activities the organization has arranged aimed at fostering a smooth transition for the immigrant who has relocated to Järvenpää. They include free Finnish language lesson classes, language clubs, excursions, and multicultural events. In addition, immigrants could participate in Living room activities if they desired. Other services to support immigrants such as counselling and guidance for working in Finland and Finnish society are provided. The multicultural work is aimed at promoting good ethnic relations and intercultural interaction guided by the perception of social capital as a feature arising from the person and the community. From an individual's perspective, social capital is understood as a factor and part of his or her human capital. While the community perspective is seen through the functioning of the communities by promoting activities aimed at primarily encouraging the interaction of different people and groups. (Setlementti louhela, 2019.)

## **3.5 Volunteers recipients of voluntary services**

Setlementti Louhela Ry is responsible for arranging voluntary services in Järvenpää. There are a lot of people in the city that require volunteer services in various ways. Volunteering is viewed as an act of helping and supporting another person on a free basis.



It is seen as an act where reciprocity between people occurs and everyone willing participates to bring joy and happiness. Voluntary services include being a friend to an elderly person or an immigrant, as a support person for a person with a developmental disability, as one-time assistant for a particular task, as a group facilitator in the living room or multicultural clubs, as cultural or sports pilots and from peer-support involved in events as an organizer or performer. (Setlementti louhela, 2019.)

The organization views social capital to be built on trust, reciprocity, and social networks (Setlementti louhela, 2019). Following Putnam's (2004) view that social capital is mainly the extent people interact with each other in environments of fairness resulting in the growth of faith in one another to share (Putnam, 2004). The organization shares the same view that social capital is built on trust, reciprocity, and social networks (Setlementti louhela, 2019).

## **4 Methodology**

In this chapter, a presentation of the study design is given. A description of the data collection method, dataset and sample is provided. Then, an in-depth account of the types of measurement conducted and the variables are provided. The chapter concludes with a presentation of a detailed analytic procedure of the data. The analysis of the study was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program. Frequency distribution tests on all indicators was conducted then I performed Pearson's Chi-square test of independence on the indicators with social-demographic variables to assess how these elements influence people's social capital.

### **4.1 Aim of the study**

Overall, the present thesis explores social capital concept from a micro-level and applies Putnam's (1995; 1998; 2000) view of the concept of social capital, which among the four social capital concepts is by far the most influential and widely applied. According to Putnam's (2000) definition, social capital comprises "social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam 2000, p 19). The definition is argued to have motivated scholars to incorporate trust and reciprocity components as social capital measures in their research.

The present study explores both cognitive and structural social capital through the investigation of civic activities of Setlementti Louhela Ry. Some scholars have argued and concluded that trust and reciprocity can amount to a "cognitive side" of social capital or serve as an indicator of it. It, therefore, is imperative to try to have the cognitive indicators and structural indicators of social capital as measures of social capital in the conceptual

framework and then have them evaluated accordingly.

Considering the wide range of activities CSOs are engaged in, their role is significant in society. Their activities affect the communities significantly in various ways such as socially, culturally, and economically. It is from this background that I draw the research question, **what are people's perceptions of civic activities influencing their social capital?** To address this research question, I investigate the activities of one CSO in Finland called Setlementti Louhela Ry located in Järvenpää as a case study. The organization provides civic activities to the community and in 2018 conducted a survey about social capital among the service users which works as data for this study.

## **4.2 Data collection and sample**

The study is based on a survey data where a total population of 999 users participated in the civic activities of the organization for the year 2018. Participants comprised of 600 females and 399 males. In terms of age distribution, participants under 17 years accounted for 12.5%, 18-29 years were 15%, 30-62 years were 41% and those above 63 years accounted for 31.5%. A random total sample size of 171 participants from the four civic groups in the study was drawn over a period of three weeks. The data collected was on social networks, social and civic participation, trust, community life, sense of belonging and sense of security.

The questionnaire was prepared by Setlementti Louhela and it was a Likert-type scale questionnaire. Survey questionnaires were administered to participants from the groups and each participant filled in the questionnaire individually. Others filled in the questionnaire at their homes and returned it to the organization upon completion. The

questionnaires were in paper form, to be filled with either a pen or pencil and were in Finnish and English language to cater to all participants.

In quantitative research, an important assumption is made that the sample size is aimed at representing the population on grounds that the probability for the members of the sample size to be selected is known (Onwuegbuzie, 2017). In the table 1, the description of the final sample is provided. In the final sample, 71% were females while 29% were males. In terms of age, 7-17 years, 2%, 18-29 years, 10%, 30-62 years, 28% and 63 years and above 61%. This suggests that the sample size seems to represent the population well from a gender perspective but not well enough from the age distribution. There are more older people in the data than other age groups. In that regard, the sample data does not fully represent the population but gives insight to the general perception of social capital overall. The highest number of participants were females aged above 63 years representing 61% of all participants. The lowest number of respondents came from the youngest age group (7-17 years) with only 2% of all participants. In general, there were more female respondents than males with 71% and 29% females and males, respectively.

**Table 1. Socio-demographic characters**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Multicultural (n=15)</b>	<b>Living room (n=26)</b>	<b>Voluntary Recipients (n=72)</b>	<b>Volunteers (n=58)</b>	<b>Total (171)</b>
7- 17 years	<3	<3	<3	<3	4
18-29 years	<3	<3	13	<3	17
30-62 years	12	6	9	19	46
63 years and above	<3	17	48	37	104
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	10	17	49	42	121
Male	5	7	21	14	49
Other	<3	<3	<3	<3	<3

*n=number of participants in the sample group*

*\*Others refer to participants who did not identify themselves with either gender.*

*<3=less than three*

In the multicultural group, significant contribution comes from the age group 30-62, amounting to 80% of all multicultural group participants. This was expected because this represents the working-age group that typically is interested in language skills training. Unlike the multicultural group, the living room, recipients of voluntary services, and volunteers' group's majority respondents are the oldest age group representing 65, 67, and 64% of the entire respective groups. In all groups, females outscored males by significant margin.

#### **4.2.1 Cognitive Social capital measures and variables**

To assess the cognitive aspect of social capital in this study, three indicators were used. Generalized trust, sense of belonging and reciprocity. Generalized trust is usually

presented not only to known people, but, to also unknown people. Generalized trust enhances the chances of an individual to participate in civic activities such as volunteering (Putnam, 2000). Usually, in several works of literature, the intake for generalized trust would take the form of such as ‘if you were to speak generally, could one say a significant number of people are trustworthy or not?’. In this study, the focus was to capture the feeling from the perspective of social interaction as a result of participating in the civic actions of the organization hence, generalized trust was measured with a statement “*Socializing with different people has increased my trust in people*” and sense of belonging with a statement “*I have found a group where I feel I belong at Louhela*”. To measure reciprocity, participants were given a statement “*I trust that I can get help and advice at Setlementti Louhela*” as an intake. A Likert-type scale was employed for both variables with respondents selecting among the following; fully disagree (1), partially disagree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), partially agree (4), fully agree (5), and I cannot say (0). The results of the Likert scale are interpreted in a manner that “fully agree and partly agree” are combined to indicate “positive”, “neither agree nor disagree” and “I cannot say” indicate “neutrality” while “fully disagree and partly disagree” indicate “negative”.

#### **4.2.2 Structural social capital measures and variables**

There were two indicators to measure structural social in this study. Social contact and social participation. Social participation draws on the involvement of individuals in established assemblies and taking part in civic engagement such as volunteering. Through such activities, networks are established which are informal in nature. It is from such interactions that makes it important because friendships are born which benefit society through unpaid help and other incentives.

Similar to cognitive social measurement, a Likert-type scale with codes comprising; fully

disagree (1), partly disagree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), partly agree (4), fully agree (5), and I cannot say (0) was used on both variables. To measure social contact, respondents were presented with a statement, *“I have been able to make new friends through the activities”* and social participation was measured with a statement *“Participating in the activities has increased my social interactions”* or *participating in the activities makes me feel good.*

The results of the Likert scale are interpreted in a manner that “fully agree and partly agree” are combined to indicate “positive”, “neither agree nor disagree” and “I cannot say” indicate “neutrality” while “fully disagree and partly disagree” indicate “negative”.

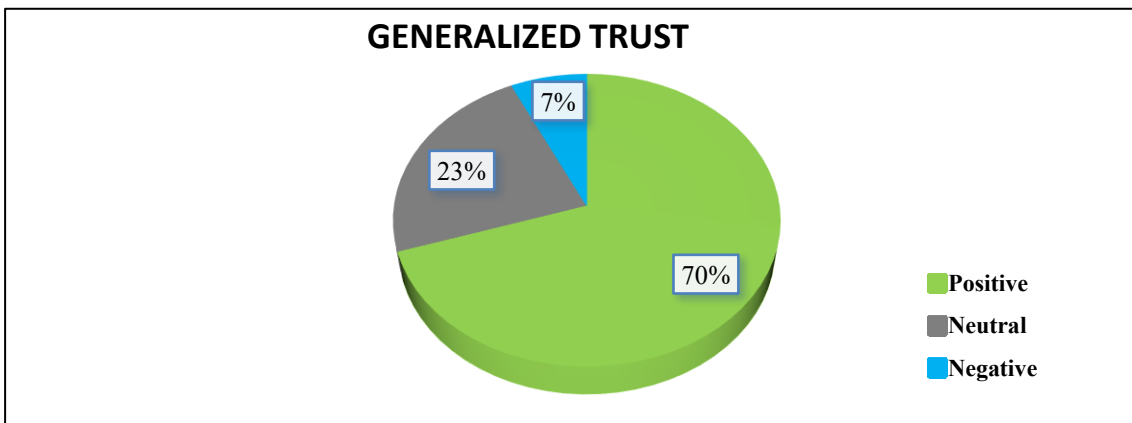
#### **Socio-demographic variables**

Two socio-demographic background variables were used during the survey. They were age and gender. Age was categorized into four groups. (Below 18 years, 18-29 years, 30-62 years and 63 years and above). Three categories with codes were created for gender, they were, Female (1), Male (2) and Other (3).

## 5 Results

### 5.1 Frequency analysis for both cognitive and structural social capital.

Overall, the frequency distributions in all groups under study indicate more positive responses than negative responses across all indicators implying that the participant's perceptions of civic activities enhancing their social capital is positive. Figure 4 summarizes results on generalized trust. A total of 166 participants responded and more than half (70%) of the total participants across all the groups indicated that socializing with other people increased their trust in others, hence influencing their generalized trust. Subsequently, below a quarter of the total number of participants across all groups indicated negative (7%) and neutral (23%) responses.



*Figure 4. Generalized trust total responses*

All participants in the multicultural group were strongly positive while in other groups, the range was 61 – 100%. Over a quarter (29%) of participants in the Volunteer's group opted to be neutral while the Voluntary recipients group showed the highest percentage of participants across all groups that indicated negative perceptions (Table 2).



**Table 2. Cognitive and structural social capital indicator's frequency distribution**

	Voluntary recipients	(%)	Living room.	(%)	Multicultural	(%)	Volunteers	(%)
<i>Socializing with different people has increased my trust in other people (Generalized trust)</i>								
Agree	43	61 %	19	83 %	15	100 %	40	69 %
Neither agree nor disagree	18	26 %	3	13 %			17	29 %
Disagree	9	13 %	<3	4 %			<3	<2 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<i>I can share the joys and sorrows with others when I want (Reciprocity)</i>								
Agree	43	66 %	18	72 %	15	100 %	39	67 %
Neither agree nor disagree	19	29 %	6	28 %			16	28 %
Disagree	3	5 %					3	5 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<i>I have found at Louhela a group I feel I belong (Sense of belonging)</i>								
Agree	55	77 %	17	74 %	14	93 %	26	45 %
Neither agree nor disagree	12	17 %	6	26 %	<3	7 %	23	40 %
Disagree	4	6 %					9	15 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<i>I have been able to make new friends through the activities (Social contact)</i>								
Agree	37	54 %	22	96 %	15	100 %	29	50 %
Neither agree nor disagree	14	20 %	<3	<3 %			21	36 %
Disagree	18	26 %	<3	<3 %			4	14 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<i>Participating in the activities has increased my social interactions (Social participation)</i>								
Agree	45	65 %	16	70 %	14	100 %	23	40 %
Neither agree nor disagree	19	28 %	4	17 %			29	50 %
Disagree	3	7 %	3	13 %			6	10 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>100 %</b>

<3=less than three

In terms of reciprocity, there was also a generally positive response across all groups with an almost similar profile to generalized trust. A total number of 163 participants from all the groups responded and over half (69%) of them were positive about sharing their joys and sorrows with others whenever they wanted to do so. On the contrary, less than a quarter (6%) of the total participants disagreed while a quarter (25%) opted to be neutral (see figure 5).

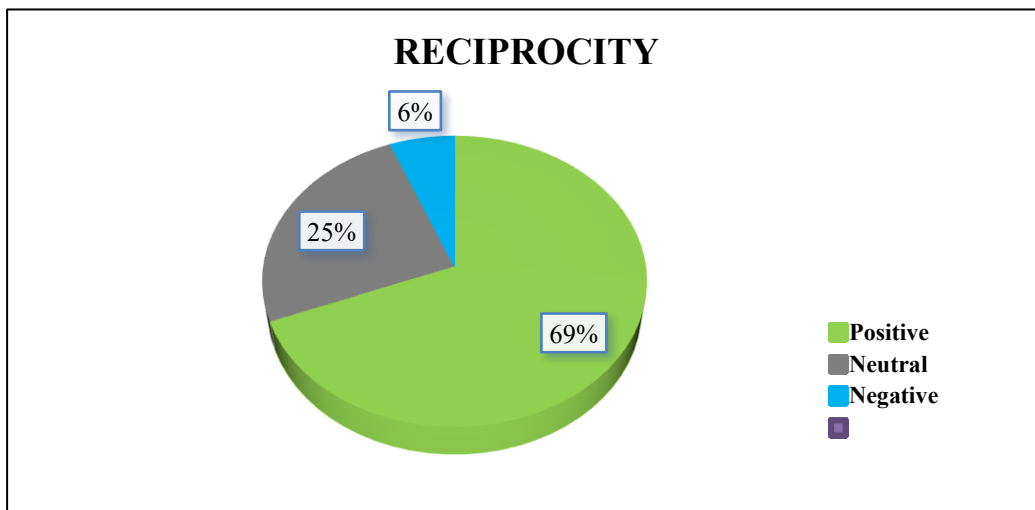


Figure 5. Total responses from all groups about reciprocity

Additionally, all the participants in the Multicultural group were positive about their perception towards reciprocity whereas, slightly over a quarter of participants in the Voluntary recipient's group, Living-room group, and Volunteers group indicated neutrality perceptions towards sharing their joys and sorrows with others (see Table 2).

A total of 167 participants responded to the indicator sense of belonging according to the frequency distribution for all groups. The analysis revealed that almost three-quarters (67%) of all participants found a group they felt they belonged through the civic activities

whereas accounting for a quarter (25%) of all participants chose to be neutral and 8% of all participants indicated negative (see figure 6).

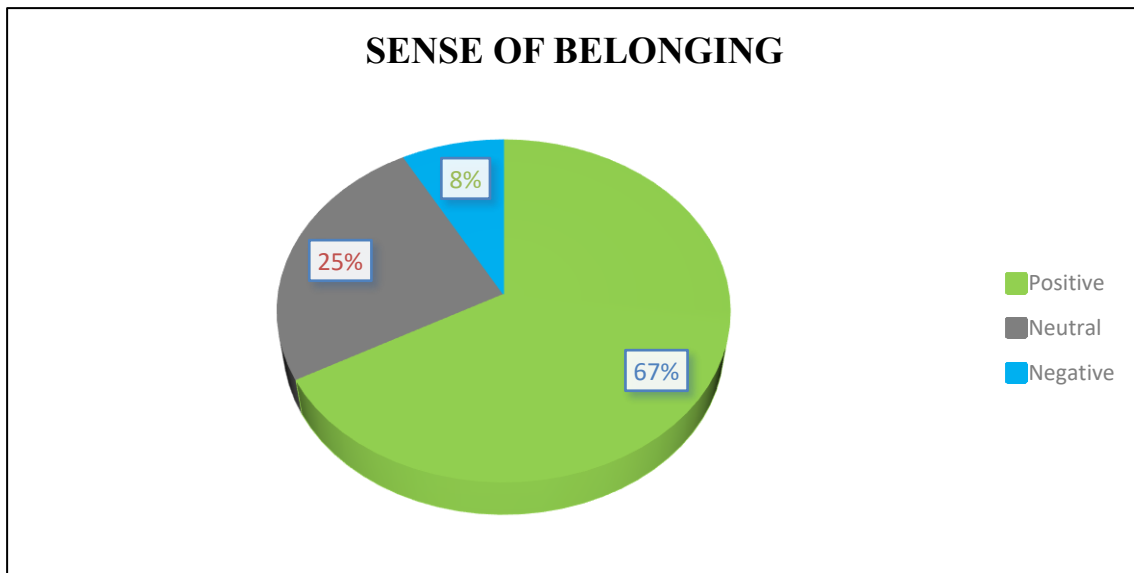


Figure 6. Total responses about sense of belonging

Furthermore, frequency analysis of structural social capital indicators shows that in all the groups, more participants had positive perceptions towards civic activities influencing their social capital. In the case of social contact, a total number of 167 participants responded, and accounting for over half (62%) of them indicated to have made new friends through the activities. Again, those participants who disagreed (16%) to have made new friends or opted to be neutral only accounted for under a quarter (22%) of all participants (see figure 7). A notable feature in this result came from the Volunteers group where half (50%) of participants indicated positive to the activities which could be explained by the nature of their participation. In their work, volunteers usually work with specific clients. Social participation was captured with an indicator that implied that participating in the activities helps respondents to socialize with others.

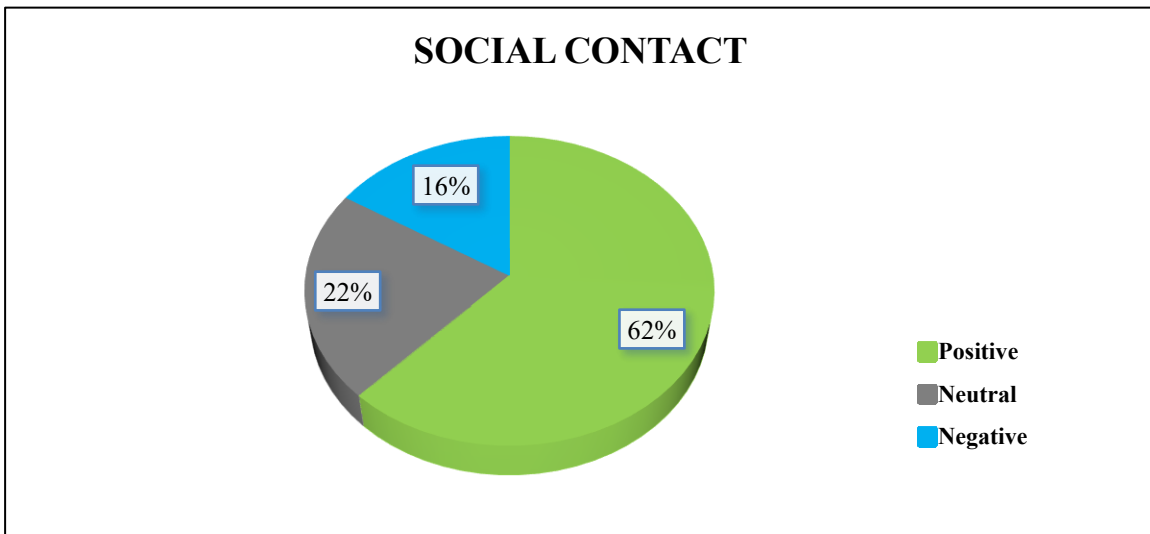


Figure 7. Total responses about social contact

A total of 162 participants responded from which 60% indicated positive perceptions that the civic activities influenced their socialization with others. Only 7% of the total respondents gave a negative response while over a quarter (32%) opted to be neutral. In terms of group distribution, it was observed that the multicultural group had the highest satisfaction with a 93% score with the opposite being volunteers again at 47%. The range like in other groups is wide meaning that the opinions vary largely among participant groups. The variation in satisfaction could be explained by the different needs of the groups. the nature of participation in the civic activities of the organization, which limits their social contacts, consequently also limiting social participation.

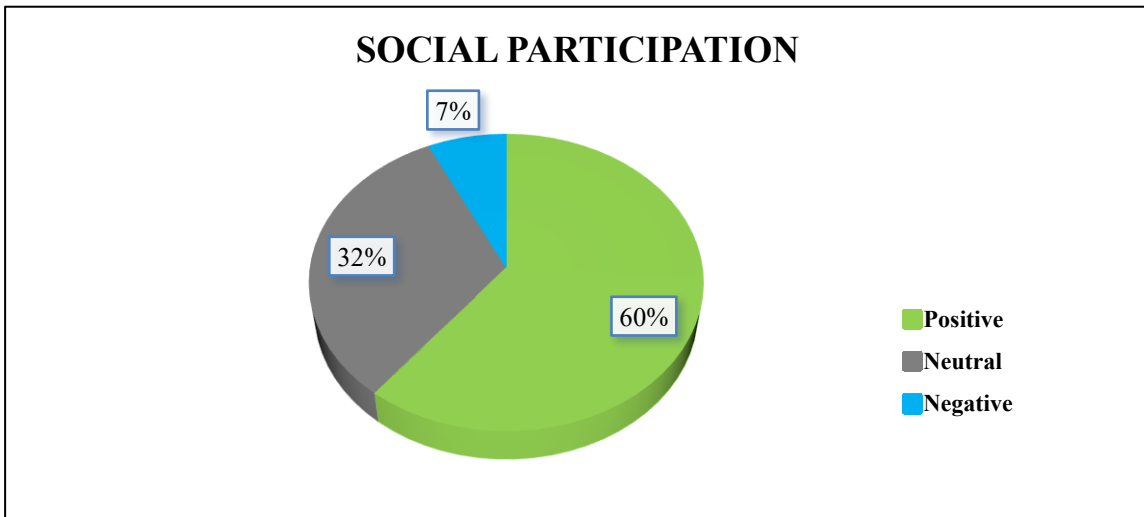


Figure 8. Social participation total responses

In this category, the volunteer participants were largely neutral with up to 50% score. Their neutrality should not be perceived as negative because it is largely shaped by Almost all the participants in the Multicultural group were positive about their perception towards sense of belonging whereas, less than half of participants in the Volunteers shared that perspective. Subsequently, almost half of participants in the same group indicated neutrality perceptions towards sharing their joys and sorrows with others.

## 5.2 Crosstabulation analysis between age and social capital indicators

In this section, crosstabulation analysis was performed between socio-demographic character age with both, cognitive and structural variables. A summary of the results is presented in Table 3. Under generalized trust, the results show that a total of 167 valid cases were reported across all the groups under study. Participants within the age group 7-17 years were more positive about their experiences of generalized trust compared with the other age groups whereas, participants within the age group above 63 years indicated more negative experiences towards generalized trust than any other group. The differences in generalized trust between age groups were statistically significant and can be

generalized to all service users ( $p > 0.05$ ). Nevertheless, some groups had few observations hence decreasing the reliability of the test.

**Table 3. Age and cognitive social capital crosstabulation**

Generalized trust		Agree	neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	P-value
<b>Age (years)</b>	Under 18	N	3		0.013
		%	100%		
	18-29	N	9	5	<3
		%	56%	31%	13%
	30-62	N	32	10	6
		%	67%	21%	13%
	Above 63	N	72	23	4
		%	72%	23%	4%
<b>Total</b>		N	<b>116 (70%)</b>	<b>38 (23%)</b>	<b>12 (7%)</b>
<b>Reciprocity</b>					<b>P-value</b>
	Under 18	N	<3		0.009
		%	100%		
	18-29	N	7	5	3
		%	58%	33%	25%
	30-62	N	29	13	3
		%	64%	29%	7%
	Above 63	N	77	19	3
		%	78%	19%	3%
<b>Total</b>		N	<b>114 (73%)</b>	<b>37 (24%)</b>	<b>6 (3%)</b>
<b>Sense of belonging</b>					<b>P-value</b>
	Under 18	N	<3	<3	0.000
		%	50%	50%	
	18-29	N	11	<3	<3
		%	73%	13%	14%
	30-62	N	27	13	5
		%	60%	29%	11%
	Above 63	N	73	24	5
		%	72%	24%	4%
<b>Total</b>		N	<b>112</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>12</b>
		%	<b>68%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>8%</b>

*N* = number of participants

<3 = less than three

With reciprocity, a total of 157 valid responses were recorded from all participants. The results indicate a similar trend of associations as that of generalized trust. Over half of all participants in all the age groups were positive about sharing their joys and sorrows with others with participants within the age group 7-17 years outscoring the other groups.

Responses from participants of the two youngest age groups were the same as those of those from generalized trust. The other age groups showed slight changes in levels of agreeability to sharing their joys and sorrows with others. The analysis also showed that a relationship between the age of respondents and reciprocity was statistically significant can be generalized to the all service users ( $p < .05$ ). The difference seems statistically significant, but the number of observations in the age groups under 18 years old and those between 18-29 years decreases the reliability of the test.

The cross-tabulation results of the age of respondents and sense of belonging show that in the age group 7-17-years, half of the participants were positive that through the civic activities, they found a group they felt they belonged while the other half indicated negative. Almost three-quarters of participants aged 18-29 years and above 63 years were positive that they found a group they felt they belonged while less than a quarter in either of the groups were either neutral or negative. Additionally, over a quarter of participants aged 30-62 years opted to be neutral (29%) while slightly over half were positive about finding a group, they felt they belonged. The analysis also showed that a relationship between the age of respondents and sense of belonging was statistically significant can be generalized to the all service users ( $p < .05$ ). The difference seems statistically significant,

but the number of observations in the age groups under 18 years old and those between 18-29 years decreases the reliability of the test.

Furthermore, regarding structural social capital indicators, the crosstabulation results in table 5 below show a similar profile across all age groups as of cognitive indicators. The analysis shows that over half of all participants in the groups were positive that they have been able to make friends through civic activities. The age group 18-29 outscored the other groups with almost three-quarters of respondents indicating positive to the indicator. Subsequently, the age group above 63 years had the highest score (35%) of participants that opted to be neutral whereas the aged group 30-62 years had the highest negative responses (11%). The analysis also showed that a relationship between the age of respondents and social contact was statistically significant can be generalized to the all service users ( $p < .05$ ). The difference seems statistically significant, but the number of observations in the age groups under 18 years old and those between 18-29 years decreases the reliability of the test.

The crosstabulation results between age and social participation show that across all the age groups, more than half of the total participants (164) had positive perceptions that participating in civic activities increased their social interaction. The age group 30-62 had the highest score (72%) while participants above 63 years on the contrary had the highest score of participants who indicated negative perceptions towards civic activities influencing their social interaction. The same group also showed the highest number (26%) of participants who opted to be neutral. All the three (3) participants aged 7-17 indicated that the activities increased their social interactions. The analysis also showed that a relationship between the age of respondents and social contact was statistically significant can be generalized to the all service users ( $p < .05$ ). The difference seems statistically



significant, but the number of observations in the age groups under 18 years old and those between 18-29 years decreases the reliability of the test.

**Table 4. Age and structural social capital crosstabulation**

<b>Social contact</b>			<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>P-value</b>
Age (years)	Under 18	N	<3	<3		0.000
		%	67%	33%		
	18-29	N	10	3	<3	
		%	71%	21%	8%	
	30-62	N	27	11	5	
		%	63%	26%	11%	
	Above 63	N	59	35	6	
		%	59%	35%	6%	
<b>Total</b>		N	<b>98</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>12</b>	
		%	<b>61%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>8%</b>	
<b>Social participation</b>						<b>P-value</b>
	Under 18	N	<3	<3		0.005
		%	67%	33%		
	18-29	N	10	<3		
		%	58%	33%		
	30-62	N	33	9	4	
		%	72%	20%	8%	
	Above 63	N	55	27	21	
		%	53%	26%	21%	
<b>Total</b>		N	<b>100</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>25</b>	
		%	<b>61%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>15%</b>	

*N= number of participants*

*<3=less than three*

### **5.3 crosstabulation analysis of gender and social capital indicators in all groups**

This section examines if there are variations of social capital among participants in the civic activities because of gender. Table 5 below shows a summary of the results obtained from the analysis.

For the generalized trust, the results show a total count of 164 participants out of which 71% were females and 29% were males. Females were more positive about generalized trust than males while males accounted for more participants who were neutral whereas both genders were equal on those that disagreed that socializing increased their trust in other people. The analysis also showed that a relationship between the gender of respondents and generalized trust was statistically significant can be generalized to the all service users ( $p < .05$ ).

In terms of reciprocity, over half of the total participants both females (72%) and males (67%) indicated that they can share their joy and sorrow with others whenever they desired to do so. Slightly over a quarter of males opted to be neutral whereas under a quarter of females were indecisive. The analysis also showed that a relationship between the gender of respondents and reciprocity was statistically significant can be generalized to the all service users ( $p < .05$ ).

Almost three-quarters of males (67%) and females (70%) indicated positively that civic activities improved their sense of belonging hence females were more positive than males. Besides, males were more neutral than females whereas females were more negative than males but with low scores. The analysis also showed that a relationship between the gender of respondents and sense of belonging was statistically significant can be generalized to the all service users ( $p < .05$ ).

For structural social capital and gender, in the case of social contact, the analysis shows that a total of 161 participants from all groups were reported. From both genders, more than half of participants were positive that civic activities increased their social contact with males (74%) agreeing more than females (57%). Subsequently, a quarter (25%) of females opted to be neutral, and less than a quarter from each gender were negative about the civic activities. The analysis also showed that a relationship between the gender of respondents and social contact was statistically significant can be generalized to the all service users ( $p < .05$ ). In the case of social participation, the crosstabulation analysis results show that over half of participants from both genders (Males 67%, Females 58%) were positive perceptions of civic activities influencing their social participation. Similarly, to social contact, males were slightly more positive than females and subsequently, more females had negative perceptions towards civic activities influencing their social participation. The analysis also showed that a relationship between the age of respondents and social contact was statistically significant can be generalized to the all service users ( $p < .05$ ).

**Table 5 Crosstabulation of gender and cognitive social capital indicator**

			<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<b>Generalized Trust</b>	Male	N	30	14	3	0.000
		%	64%	30%	6%	
	Female	N	85	25	7	
		%	73%	21%	6%	
		N	<b>115</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>10</b>	
		%	<b>70%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>6%</b>	
			<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<b>Reciprocity</b>	Male	N	28	13	<3	0.002
		%	67%	31%	<3%	
	Female	N	84	27	5	
		%	72%	23%	5%	
		N	<b>112</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>6</b>	
		%	<b>71%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>4%</b>	
			<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<b>Sense of belonging</b>	Male	N	30	9	6	0.008
		%	67%	20%	13%	
	Female	N	78	11	22	
		%	70%	10%	20%	
		N	<b>108</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>28</b>	
		%	<b>69%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>18%</b>	

*N= number of participants*

*<3=less than three*

**Table 6. Crosstabulation summary of gender and structural social capital**

<b>Social contact</b>			<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
Gender	Male	N	32	8	3	0.381
		%	74%	19%	7%	
	Female	N	67	29	22	
		%	57%	25%	18%	
Total		N	<b>99</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>25</b>	
		%	<b>61%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>16%</b>	

<b>Social participation</b>			<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>P-value</b>
Gender	Male	N	29	12	<3	0.148
		%	67%	28%	5%	
	Female	N	66	37	10	
		%	58%	33%	9%	
Total		N	<b>95</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>12</b>	
		%	<b>61%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>8%</b>	

*N= number of participants*

*<3=less than three*

Overall, the frequency distributions in all groups under study indicate more positive responses than negative responses across all indicators implying that the participant's perceptions of civic activities enhancing their social capital is positive.

## 6 Discussion

In this study, I explored the influence of civic activities in enhancing people's social capital, specifically, among service users of civic activities at Setlementti Louhela Ry in Järvenpää, Finland. The sample population comprised of persons aged between 7 to above 63 years in four different groups (Multicultural, Volunteers, Recipients of voluntary services and the Living-room group) at Setlementti Louhela Ry.

The conceptual background of this study explored the concept of social capital focussing mainly on Putnam's (2002) views about social capital to imply the relations among people or social networks produced from accepted life standards of reciprocity and are complemented by the trust (Putnam, 2000, p. 18–19). Additionally, he argues that informal resources are community products produced through community services. (Putnam, 2002).

Five variables were employed as measures of aspects of social capital that fall within the four popular avenues of social capital namely, public contribution, public systems and assistance, social exchange and trust, and community participation adopted by the OECD (2003) during the international conference on the measurement of social capital (Lisakka, 2006).

The study used three cognitive social capital measures; generalized trust, sense of belonging and reciprocity while social contact and social participation were indicators for structural social capital. The indicators measured mainly values, attitudes, beliefs, trust and reciprocity as shared norms (Uphoff, 2000). These indicators mostly aim at capturing the feelings and thoughts of people rather than what they do. Usually, others refer to this as 'the less tangible' area of social capital (Kawachi, 2008).

Consistent with the study's theoretical approach, the findings suggest that participants' perceptions towards civic activities influencing both their cognitive and structural social capital were overall more positive. The frequency distribution on cognitive social capital shows over half of the respondents in all the groups indicated high positive perceptions towards both cognitive and structural dimensions of social capital with the exception of the Volunteer's group where more than half indicated either neutral status or negative towards the indicator sense of belonging. A similar result was observed from the same group on the indicator of social participation.

## **6.1 Cognitive social capital**

Many scholars have perceived cognitive social capital as the basis under which social exchange occurs. Others further view cognitive social capital as a product of one's involvement and assimilation in a community system (Bhandari, 2009.) These views have received heavy criticism by a lot of scholars such as Portes (1998). A significant number of scholars have relied on Putnam's (1998;2000) theoretical framework view of cognitive social capital. In his framework, Putnam (1998; 2000), posits that both trust and reciprocity are products of social exchange. In his description of social capital theory, he stated that "social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam, 2000, p.19).

This definition is argued to have inspired other researchers to arrive at two conclusions regarding social capital, firstly, to view both reciprocity and trust as ideal indicators of social capital and secondly, that they are important elements of social capital. This is evident through the research which relied on these indicators and that the findings favor these claims. The results show that overall, the measures of cognitive social capital which

were generalized trust, reciprocity and sense of belonging received more positive results than negative in all the four groups with the exception of the Volunteers group. Following Putnam (1993), social capital is a feature of the community which is part of civil society hence civic activities which are collective actions are important components of the local communities thus, social capital is fundamentally valuable. Taking the position that reciprocity plays the role of an intermediate between social exchange and social relationships, there is favorable indication from the results that an environment existed.

Generalized trust is among the widely and most employed social capital indicators in social sciences studies due to the assumption that it provides an opportunity for one to access resources outside their own social network. The results show high levels of generalized trust from all the groups. In fact, in the Multicultural group, all respondents were strongly positive. These findings correspond to results of both the Leisure Survey and World Value survey that posits that there is a high sense of generalized trust in Finland (Lisakka, 2006.)

In practical terms, the existence of clubs, associations and other forms of networks imply the presence of generalized trust in a population hence since trust is vital for many aspects of life including social networks, the absence of it results in low if any productivity. Granovetter, (1995) supports this line of reasoning and suggested that when there is high unproductivity in a society, there is low trust whether be it generalized or network or any other form (Granovetter, 1995).

According to Platteau (1994), generalized trust is a product of general knowledge of a community or society's networks and associations over some time (Platteau, 1994). It is common that when a community or society possesses high levels of trust among each other,



economic progress also flourishes. In comparison to other forms of trust, generalized trust produces more positive yields than other forms of trust. This is due to the attribute it has of being established quicker at a low cost. It can hence be concluded that enhancing generalized trust has greater positive outcomes for societies around the world. (Granovetter, 1995).

## **6.2 Structural social capital**

A critical analysis of Putnam's (2009) definition of social capital reveals that elements of structural social capital are incorporated in his conceptualization of the concept. Aspects such as social contact and social participation are included hence in this study, they were considered vital to be added. As earlier stated in the study, structural social capital provides a description of networks in which people interact and stakeholders that facilitate such connections between individuals and groups. The results from the groups in the study show that half of the respondents and in other groups more than half indicated positive perceptions towards social contact whereas, all the groups with the exception of the Volunteers group indicated half or more participants expressed positive perceptions towards social participation. The findings reveal the importance of social participation as an indicator of structural social capital. It shows the 'action' side of social capital.

Participation in civic activities may be driven by a variety of factors but in Putnam's (2000) view, structural social capital in form of social participation enhances trust among people (Putnam, 2000.) There is evidence from previous studies suggesting that discrimination and injustice hinder people's participation in activities which eventually fosters exclusion in society (Rostila, 2013). It is for this reason that social networks are among the many types of social systems cardinal to social capital.

Returning to the research question, “*what are people’s perceptions of civic activities influencing their social capital?*” there is enough evidence in this study suggesting that civic activities largely support social capital among the service users. It is worth stating that some scholars such as Portes, (1998) have expressed concern over the grouping of a variety of indicators perceived to measure areas of social capital. However, in Putnam’s view concerning the connection of reciprocity, trust and social capital, he notes that the causes and effects between them are “as tangled as well-tossed spaghetti” (Putnam, 2000, p. 137). This view is supported by other scholars who observed that these indicators have been treated either as antecedents or outcomes of social capital by many scholars instead of social capital itself. In this study, the authors’ position is that these indicators represent social capital (Portes, 1998).

### **6.3 Demographic characters and social capital**

Social capital assists us in developing a broader understanding of the interaction between individuals, groups, and society. It highlights the vital role of social networks and other social resources that enhance the wellbeing of people. In the present study, interest was also given to investigate if there were variations in the perceptions of social capital due to gender and age. It must be noted firstly that in terms of gender, there were more female participants than male participants in all groups in both the sample size and the population. Females accounted for almost three-quarters (71%) of all respondents and males accounted for slightly over a quarter (29%). In terms of age, participants above 63 years accounted for the majority (61%) of respondents while participants under 17 years accounted for the lowest number of respondents (2%). This trend supports a hypothesis suggesting that senior citizens have a higher chance to actively get involved in community events hence rendering it possible to develop social networks with friends and other associates.

Additionally, Lisakka (2006) also arrived at a similar result where people above 75 years exhibited a significant amount of trust in comparison to other age ranges in the study. As can be seen in the results section Table 3 and Table 4, in all indicators participants above 63 years accounted for the majority of the respondent. According to Nyqvist (2016), they acknowledge that a link between social capital and loneliness exists and possibilities are there that suggest that age may have a role to play although other factors may as well be responsible. Therefore, this view may as well explain high levels of participation in the activities by the age group above 63 years. Additionally, it is plausible that after retirement, older people opted to live in the same neighborhood hence have created social networks that have lasted long.

## 7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I present the conclusions of the study beginning with a summary of the study where general conclusions about the research are made in relation to the research question. I proceed in the next section to share the positives and challenges of the study and concludes with suggestions to be considered in future studies of this kind.

The study's main objective was to investigate people's perspectives on civic activities enhancing their social capital. The study adopted a case study approach by examining Settlementti Louhela's participants in their civic activities. The findings of the study are based on frequency distribution and cross tabulation. Overall, the results show that civic activities have a positive impact on social capital as perceived by all groups. In terms of structural social capital, the clubs and other groups played a vital role in providing a platform for social contact and social participation. The benefits that arise from this are exchange of information, creation of social networks etc. The level of positivity seems to vary a lot among different groups surveyed, for example volunteers' perceptions were not as positive as the Living-room participants which could be assumed as a result of their varying social contacts and participation.

For cognitive social capital, the general results indicate community interaction and participation which eventually fosters community development. Also, enhancing trust among people. Therefore, these findings reinforce the view that social capital is constituted by both cognitive and structural social capital. Due to aspects of the data, changes were made to the study design. The sample size was inadequate to allow for extensive analysis procedures such as regression models and principle component analysis as intended. Therefore, it was necessary to make suitable adjustments to the design.

Additionally, in terms of demographic characters gender and age, indicated that overall, females exhibited more positive results than males in all indicators. In contrast, the results show more negative responses among males than females. Also, more males opted to be neutral than females while overall, most participants in the sample population comprised of females.

## **7.1 Limitations of this study**

While there are numerous findings from this study, several limitations that may have affected results have also been observed. The first limitation is associated with the age distribution of respondents. The dataset suffered uneven age distribution among participants with age groups under 30 years poorly represented compared to participants above 63 years. Secondly, the way statements in the questionnaires used as data collecting tool were phrased posed a challenge to capture the intended response. In comparison with popularly used models across many studies or established models for instance by the OECD, some statements posed a challenge in capturing the information sort after.

The data was collected by the organization and the sample size was rather small to use multiple statistical tools for data analysis. In that line, the extent to which generalizability of results was conducted remained to the context from which this study was conducted. However, this study primarily paid attention to the conceptualization of social capital from Putnam's (2000) perspective while capturing it from civic activities point of view. In that same light, as already stated earlier, the sample size comprised mainly of older participants above 63 years, the input from middle-aged people is not as older people hence one would ask about how representative the finding is across the population.

## **7.2 Future suggestions**

Social capital is still somewhat a new theory hence the need for continued investigation both empirically and theoretically to arrive at appropriate dimensions of measuring it. This study contributes towards understanding of the role of civic activities in supporting social capital. Additionally, the study provides insights into how social capital is affected by age and gender. Many studies about social capital have been conducted with different measures, it is vital that whatever measures one uses, they are supported either theoretically or empirically.

The current study further reinforces the suggestion that NGOs and CSO are among potential sources of social capital other than the state. They provide an environment that may not be influenced by political players and this is evident in countries such as Finland. In that line, further studies in this avenue would further the understanding of social capital. Apart from highlighting the role of civic activities in strengthening social capital, the study also aimed at finding out the negative effects of social capital. To the best of author's knowledge, this is one avenue that has not been extensively explored. Further studies in this line would contribute positively to understanding the concept and its implications

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