

Chapter VI

Crafting the Tapestry: Findings, Conversations, and Potential Futures

6.1 Findings

The findings of the study have been presented below as follows:

SFS school is a low-fee private recognised upper primary school that shifted its location before and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The students and teachers called the school a “temple of knowledge” and a “place of learning.” The principal and teacher believed that education is critical in instilling values and morals among the students.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, activities such as morning assembly and lunch breaks had practices like young students being assisted by older students and sharing lunch boxes.

The teachers, principal, and students had strong interpersonal relationships. However, the interpersonal connections with the parents were limited. Expectations, obligations, and their fulfilment were found to play an important role in developing relationships between students, teachers, parents, and principal. Trust was also found to play a crucial role in fostering a sense of community among the students.

The school had multiple information channels between and among students, teachers, parents, and principal. Furthermore, these information channels were streamlined to improve communication within the school community.

The students' aspiration was influenced by their teacher and family members as they chose to pursue high-performing careers like teachers, doctors, and defence. Teachers also aspired to be remembered for their teaching style and called teaching a “calling” rather than an “occupation.”

The relationship among the teachers had blurred professional and personal boundaries.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the students were involved in sports such as cricket, football, kho-kho and kabaddi; cultural activities such as celebration of festivals like

Basant Panchami; and artistic activities such as dancing. However, after COVID-19, their participation and engagement in these activities reduced.

The principal adopted a multi-faceted role of teacher, mentor, and administrator. The leadership style of the principal was criticised implicitly by the teachers.

The teachers and principal refrained from explicitly talking about conflict and resolution. Rather the conflict resolution was done discreetly.

The teachers were involved in the decision-making processes in the school.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, the school experienced a structural change by being shifted to a smaller building. There were fewer students in number, hence, varying age groups of students were made to sit together, leading to the formation of multigrade classrooms.

Students opined that English Language Proficiency and success were positively associated with each other.

Students made a distinction between friend and best friend based on the extent to which they would share their innermost concerns and thoughts. However, some of the associations in the form of friendships led to students concealing their knowledge and cheating in examinations.

Longevity of association and relationships also affected the social capital within the school community.

The school mitigated the gender biases among the female students, which they faced at home.

The school relaxed its uniform policy considering financial constraints that emerged due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the students' social, cognitive, and emotional engagement in the school which was seen in the form of switching off the video during the online classes, not sitting for longer time during the classes, and physical fights in the school. The transition to online classes reduced the access of many students, which affected their engagement and learning in the school after the schools reopened.

Post-COVID-19 pandemic efforts were made by the school to revive the engagement and interaction with the community through initiatives like summer camp and celebration of festivals.

6.2 Discussion

Social capital in the context of school has been understood by Parcel et al. (2010) as the bonds between parents, students, and schools that facilitate educational attainment and academic success. The current study aimed at perceiving the generation and subsistence of social capital in an elementary school. To understand this, the subjective experiences of students, teachers, parents, and principal were gauged for nearly two and a half years (punctuated due to the COVID-19 pandemic) to reach cognizance.

The insights that emerged from the discussion, however, may be affected by other components as Comer and Gates (2004) contended in a social world, it is difficult to demarcate social aspects. The schools are one of the mainstream institutions that Arriaza and Rocha (2016) posited to channelise societal expectations and instil normative behaviour among learners. In other words, it is an agency that establishes an interrelationship between societal expectations and education. This becomes critical as it helps us to understand the extent to which social capital affects the boundaries of different actors who are involved in a collective process of teaching-learning.

One of the observations that are made in the present study was similar to Stanton-Salazar (1997, 2004), which is that every actor associated with the school acquired social capital through social and economic networks with their family, peers, and administration. This was coherent with Comer's (2015) idea that the acquisition of skills and tools is facilitated by an actor's social capital in a socio-psycho-emotional environment. This environment is marked by shared language, positive interactions, and moral and ethical behaviour of actors within a group.

The understanding gained from the present study shows that friendship, gratitude, and acknowledgement are the important drivers of social capital. The student's natural affinity for their friends transcended to sharing problems and even engaging in immoral actions such as cheating in examinations. This notion of affection engendering trust was in line with Goodard (2003) who also viewed this as an important aspect of the

development of social relationships. This development of social relationships in view of Offer and Schnieder (2007) is the foundation to manifest social capital.

Fritch (1999) opined that we often overlook the significance of activities and practices in the form of sports and cultural activities. Similarly, parent-teacher meetings, according to Murray et al. (2020), have the potential to facilitate bonding, bridging, and linking networks along with the intergenerational closure as propounded by Coleman (1988, 1990) to the social capital within the school, thus behaving as a metaphorical potent catalyst. The findings of the current study concurred that the activities in the form of morning assembly, lunch break and celebration of festivals had a significant role in sustaining the sense of belonging, trust, and bonding, bridging networks in the school, which are important elements to foster and sustain social capital.

The classes within the school ran in a multigrade classroom setting. This meant that the students varied on numerous dimensions such as gender, ethnicity, achievement level, association with the school, socio-economic background, and even transportation status were sitting together at the same time. The findings of the study showed the adaptability among the teachers and students to follow a particular academic task structure, which Erickson (1987) opined to be a combination of social and cognitive dimensions. The deliberate actions in the form of pedagogical choices reflected the teacher's awareness of the extent of attention that the students require and the nature of the tasks and information processing that needs to be done.

The bonding and bridging networks of Putnam (1995) were palpably seen in the seating arrangement of the students. Those belonging to the same neighbourhood and same caste preferred to sit together and share information pertaining to the work given in the school, thus demonstrating a 'bonding' network of social capital. In a few cases, the students reported racial remarks that indicated the absence of a 'bridging' network of social capital. This research finding is similar to Reynolds's (2007) observations of Caribbean elementary students who reported a 'bonding' network of social capital in the same ethnic group of the students and a 'bridging' network of social capital in cross-ethnic friendships.

However, in some cases, the friendship has led to some undesirable classroom behaviour among students, which Zarzar et al. (2012) recognized as unhealthy. The current study

highlighted that the desire to be accepted by peers often led to the manifestation of behaviours such as withholding information from others, not answering questions during classroom teaching, and cheating in examinations. This deviation from the normative behaviour leads to a decrease in trust, broken information channels, and a reduced sense of community, therefore decreasing the social capital of the school community. The occurrences of such behaviour had similar repercussions on school social capital, which were reported by Dufur et al. (2008), Paccagnella and Sestito (2012), and Rossem et al. (2015).

Killian and Harrison (2014) concurred that a teacher's roles and responsibilities are far and wide. The findings suggested that the teachers transformed into teacher leaders by showcasing their experience, expertise, and execution abilities during the organization of classroom teaching, festivals, and events in the school. Nappi (2014) opined that by delegating responsibilities, the principal can look forward to opportunities to take school rounds, observe the teachers, and engage in planning the development of the school. In the current study, the teachers were given different responsibilities such as collecting the fees, maintaining the inventory, and budgeting the finances. This aided the principal's attempt to check the working of the school by taking school rounds, observing the classes, and taking the meetings.

Collaborative decision-making was found to be another facet that emerged as a result of strong interpersonal and institutional dimensions of social capital. The elements such as trust, reciprocity, and open information channels were encouraged by the school administration, which was encouraging a collaborative decision-making style to govern the school. Nappi (2014) showed that a school's success is not solely dependent on the principal but is more effective in a diffused or shared state. This meant that as compared to an individual, when members of the school community come forward and collaborate, the knowledge base and shared efforts increase, thus ensuring a high rate of success for the school and its students.

The teachers were aware of the issues pertaining to the school such as non-payment of fees, delayed salary disbursement, non-cooperation of the parents, and decreased interest in learning among the students. The proactivity shown by the teachers in handling these issues through their commitment and determination made them a fulcrum

for the school. This was reminiscent of Leana's (2011), finding that the teacher's social capital is a strong predictor of the student's academic achievement.

However, the conflicts between the teachers, and between parents and teachers were observed. It was found that during our conversations, there were teachers who resorted to slander and alleged misbehaviour of their colleagues, which Kiss et al. (2014) and Spillane et al. (2015) reported had a negative impact on the institutional social capital. The findings of the present study showed that the presence of a conflict coloured with libels, gossip, and allegations weakens the trust and sense of community between the members, resulting in the decline of social capital.

Comer (2015) asserted that the home and school environments and networks are significantly different. Therefore, a positive collaboration between the school and parents would prevent a norm difference and alleviate trust-related issues. On the contrary, the data collected during the current study pointed out that the school administration and teachers perceived a lack of awareness among parents about their children's education. The lack of awareness in the view of the teachers and administration was the principal reason for the lack or absence of cooperation from parents which aggravates the issues pertaining to the school. This finding suggests that a sense of distrust exists between the school and home, which Comer (2015) believed to weaken the social capital that exists between the school and home.

While growing up, the major influences under which the child comes is that of the family, peers, and school. This means that the interpersonal relationship developed with the family, peers, and school is a major source of support and information. The students of SFS school belonged to a low socio-economic background, and their aspirations involved lucrative career goals including a teacher, a doctor, or joining the defence services. This was a contradiction to Sewell and Shah's (1967) insights that students who belong to lower social classes had less educational and occupational aspiration as compared to those belonging to higher social. This change in the perception of choice of career in the view of Howley (2006) could exude from the need to be accepted by family and community, rather than materialistic quests.

Ingersoll (2001) opined that choosing teaching as a profession is usually taken under the influence of family, peers, and teachers. Kyriacou et al. (2002) reported that choosing

teaching as a career stem from social and psychological reasons such as altruism, service to society, status in society, better economic footing, and power. These conceptions of career choice aligned with the current study, wherein it was found that students had an aspiration to live a better life than their parents and make them proud. They recognized the efforts of their parents which they put into educating them. The parents, therefore, could be said to be a strong shaper of aspirations in students of SFS school.

Another revelation of the current study was that the social capital between the school and parents decreased due to the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. Chaturvedi et al. (2021), Grewenig et al. (2021), and Jusiene et al. (2022) reported that adolescents were at risk of depression and other mental health problems due to a lack of face-to-face communication with their peers, thus affecting their efficiency to engage in online classes. Through the current study, similar episodes of longing among adolescents were found. This confirmed Lades et al. (2020) observations that irrespective of the regional disparity the prolonged isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected the psychological well-being of the students.

In addition to suffering psychosocially, the students in the present study reported a decreased learning interest, which has led to a reduction in their learning and skills. Hanushek and Woessmann (2020) and Pokherel and Chettri (2021) reported in their studies that the school closure in 2020 due to COVID-19 has resulted in a reduction in students' skills. Hanushek and Woessmann (2020) extrapolated their findings to show that the reduction of skills among students has led to a decrease in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the United States of America.

The findings of the present study show that the drastic shift to online classes has led to a digital divide in our existing segregated education system. The students and teachers reported issues such as internet access, lack or absence of digital devices, presence of insufficient digital devices for personal use, family structure, preference for the elder siblings, and absence of training to conduct online classes. Grewenig et al. (2021) in their study also highlighted the rise of educational inequality due to differences in home environment.

In summation, the school was found to be a critical agency that attempted to bridge the gap between the child and society. The multigrade classrooms led to the use of different

pedagogical choices, which showed the readiness of the teachers to adapt. Friendship, gratitude, and collaborative decision-making emerged as important drivers that affected the network, efficiency, reciprocity, trust, information sharing, and belongingness within the school. These elements encouraged bolstering social capital at various levels. However, the conflicts between teachers and school and parents were found to be a deterrent to the sustenance of social capital within the school community. This was further fuelled by the perceived notion of lack of awareness among the parents, non-cooperation of parents, and the effect of other external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic. By empowering the stakeholders by providing a much more conducive, harmonious, and positive environment, the school can increase its social capital which could help in assuaging the negative consequences of other factors.

6.3 Conclusion of the Study

The present study is an attempt to explore the concept of social capital, its generation, and sustenance in an elementary school. The method of inquiry for this study was Instrumental Case Study. The deliberations of policy-makers and educational researchers have acknowledged the role of formal and informal interactions, participation, and associations. This study has specifically focused on an elementary school within the city of Jaipur, that particularly, lacked a permanent infrastructure. Consequently, the prolonged absence of a physical infrastructure has resulted in shifting from one place to another, which became a challenge in fostering trust among the community members.

Additionally, incidences of rivalry among the teachers became an obstacle to harnessing the benefits of social capital among the teachers of the school. Yet, the school took measures to nurture collective participation in the form of decision-making, organization of functions, and even in the classrooms. The COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the issues of the school as fewer students stayed in the school and shifted to smaller building due to financial constraints. Yet the willingness to adapt among teachers and students shows that through collective actions, challenges can be addressed which will finally enhance the social capital within the school community.

6.4 Implication of the Study

By drawing the implications of the study, an attempt has been made to provide a road map to conduct further research. Apart from this, implications behave as avenues on which the body of knowledge builds and disseminates.

From the study, it was observed that more conscious and explicit approaches and strategies need to be pondered upon in order to instil a sense of belonging and trust at the global level among the students. Therefore, the policy-makers and strategists must delve deeper to develop social capital within the school students, which can have a lasting effect on their cognitive, social and emotional assignation.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of parental involvement in the education of the school. In the cases, where the school shows signs of increased conflict and lack of cooperation, the school can provide an avenue for the parents to engage in decision-making as well by convening a parent-teacher association. This could provide a medium for everyone to come together and discuss the issues pertaining to the school. The shifting schools should be provided the governmental aid to stabilise themselves in a particular place. This could result in more credibility, increased access and better quality and retention of students who often leave the school as it physically becomes inaccessible.

The study offers opportunities for the school administration and teachers to reflect on the quality and extent of social interactions.

6.5 Limitations of the Study

Even though the study attempted to study the generation of social capital and its sustenance in a school community by employing appropriate methodology, it was not feasible to deal with all the research problems. Therefore, it is important to understand that this study is accompanied by a few limitations.

Firstly, the focus of the study was to understand social capital in one school over an extended period. Thus, the ethnic composition of the school was taken into consideration without extending the information obtained to the other schools in the community. Consequently, the characteristics of the collective school communities could not be determined. Therefore, this study is limited to an individual school and its dynamics within the school.

Secondly, even though the parents were included in the study, the study could not acquire data from the neighbours. Even so, the insights about the school could be more profoundly enlightening to understand the impact of neighbourhoods on the school.

Thirdly, the study was limited to elementary students in an upper primary recognized private school. This denotes that the study was focused on the dynamics of this particular social group. Thus, it might be an underrepresentation to make conclusive remarks about social capital in the school context.

Lastly, during the study, the COVID-19 pandemic struck and the lockdown was imposed from time to time. This led to frequent disruption in data collection as the access to the participant became limited. Since the number of students was much less who physically attended the school, the study was conducted on a limited number of students over a long period time of nearly one year. Thus, assessing the extent to which the collected data was a fair and authentic representation that mirrored the participants' psyche became a challenge.

6.6 Suggestions for further studies

- More case studies can be conducted at different levels of school to gain a better and contextual understanding of social capital within the Indian school.
- The interrelationship between individual, interpersonal, and institutional dimensions can be studied to have a more focused understanding of social capital.
- Studies can also be done on the relationship between social capital and school success.
- The studies can be done on the role and effect of the implementation of the philosophy of NEP 2020 across various levels of education.