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Major Cities of Pakistan**

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## Effects of Urbanization on Community Cohesion in Major Cities of Pakistan



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Crossref

### Article History

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The aim of the study was to assess the effects of urbanization on community cohesion in major cities of Pakistan.

**Materials and Methods:** This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

**Findings:** The study found that high-density urban environments often lead to increased social fragmentation and decreased levels of trust and reciprocity among residents. Additionally, rapid urbanization can result in physical segregation, where different socioeconomic groups are spatially separated, leading to reduced social integration and solidarity. This can exacerbate inequalities and contribute to social exclusion and marginalization, particularly among vulnerable populations.

On the other hand, urban areas also facilitate the formation of new social networks and

communities based on shared interests, identities, or experiences. These "urban villages" or communities of practice can foster strong bonds and support systems, enhancing community resilience and cohesion. Moreover, the availability and accessibility of public spaces, amenities, and social infrastructure play a crucial role in shaping community cohesion.

**Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy:** Social capital theory, spatial mismatch theory and place attachment theory may be used to anchor future studies on assessing the effects of urbanization on community cohesion in major cities of Pakistan. Implement community-based programs and initiatives that strengthen social ties and foster a sense of belonging among diverse urban populations. Advocate for policies that support mixed-income housing developments and inclusive urban infrastructure, creating environments that facilitate social interaction and collaboration among residents.

**Keywords:** *Urbanization, Community, Cohesion, Cities*

## INTRODUCTION

Community cohesion, often assessed through surveys on neighborhood trust and social networks, is a vital aspect of societal well-being in developed economies. In the USA, surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center have shown a decline in trust levels among neighbors over the past decade, with only 33% of Americans reporting that they trust most or all of their neighbors in 2021, compared to 41% in 2009 (Pew Research Center, 2021). Similarly, in the UK, data from the Office for National Statistics reveals that the proportion of people who feel a strong sense of belonging to their neighborhood has decreased from 68% in 2012-2013 to 64% in 2018-2019 (Office for National Statistics, 2020).

Turning to developing economies, Japan provides an interesting case study. Research published in the *Journal of Rural Studies* found that community cohesion in rural Japan has been positively influenced by initiatives such as community festivals and local economic development projects (Kubo et al., 2017). This indicates that targeted interventions can play a significant role in strengthening social ties and fostering trust within communities, even in contexts outside of Western developed economies.

In developing economies, community cohesion often faces unique challenges and opportunities. For example, in India, a study published in the *Journal of Community Psychology* explored the impact of community-based interventions on trust and social networks in rural villages (Saraf et al., 2018). The research highlighted that participatory development programs led to increased trust among community members and strengthened social ties, emphasizing the role of collective action in promoting cohesion.

Similarly, in Brazil, research conducted by the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA) indicated a positive correlation between social capital, measured through indicators such as trust and reciprocity, and community well-being (IPEA, 2018). This suggests that fostering social connections and cooperation can contribute significantly to enhancing the overall quality of life and resilience in developing economies.

In Nigeria, a study published in the *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* examined the role of social networks and trust in community cohesion, particularly in urban areas (Adeyemi, 2019). The findings indicated that while urbanization poses challenges to traditional social structures, innovative community initiatives and social networks contribute significantly to maintaining cohesion and resilience.

In Mexico, community cohesion is crucial for addressing social challenges. A study published in the *International Journal of Community Well-Being* examined the impact of community engagement programs on trust and social networks in marginalized urban areas (Hernandez, 2020). The research highlighted that inclusive community initiatives led to improved social cohesion and resilience, emphasizing the role of grassroots efforts in fostering trust among residents.

In Bangladesh, community cohesion is intertwined with economic development. A study published in the *Journal of Development Studies* explored the role of microfinance programs in enhancing social capital and trust among rural communities (Zaman, 2018). The findings indicated that access to financial resources through community-based initiatives not only improved economic outcomes but also strengthened social ties, showcasing the interconnectedness between economic empowerment and social cohesion in developing economies.

In Indonesia, community cohesion plays a vital role in disaster resilience. A study published in the *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* investigated the impact of community-based disaster management on trust and social networks in vulnerable coastal communities (Sari et al., 2019). The research highlighted that collaborative efforts and strong social bonds among residents contribute significantly to effective disaster response and recovery, showcasing the importance of community cohesion in mitigating risks.

Moving to Rwanda, post-genocide reconciliation efforts have centered on rebuilding trust and fostering social cohesion. Research by the Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR-Rwanda) emphasized the role of community dialogues and grassroots reconciliation initiatives in healing societal divisions and promoting unity (IPAR-Rwanda, 2018). This highlights the transformative power of community-driven processes in rebuilding trust and strengthening social ties after periods of conflict.

In Uganda, community cohesion is integral to sustainable development. A study published in the *Journal of Rural and Community Development* examined the impact of community-led initiatives on social capital and cooperation in rural areas (Okello, 2018). The findings underscored that participatory development approaches, including community-based organizations and cooperative ventures, contribute significantly to fostering trust and resilience within communities, showcasing the importance of bottom-up strategies in promoting cohesion.

Additionally, in South Africa, research conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) emphasized the importance of addressing historical inequalities and social divisions in promoting community cohesion (HSRC, 2021). Efforts to build inclusive social policies and foster intergroup dialogue were identified as critical strategies for strengthening social bonds and trust within diverse communities.

Moving to Ghana, research conducted by the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana emphasized the importance of cultural values and traditional institutions in promoting community cohesion (Institute of African Studies, 2022). The study showcased how community-based practices and social networks contribute to solidarity and mutual support, particularly in rural settings, showcasing the resilience embedded in local social structures.

In sub-Saharan African economies, community cohesion is often shaped by unique social dynamics and challenges. For instance, a study published in *World Development* examined community cohesion in Kenya and highlighted how traditional social structures and community-based organizations contribute to fostering trust and cooperation among residents (Lwanga-Ntale, 2020). Such findings underscore the importance of understanding local contexts and leveraging existing social capital to promote community cohesion in diverse economic settings.

Degree of urbanization refers to the extent of urban development in a given area, typically measured by factors like population density and infrastructure development. Four likely degrees of urbanization can be categorized based on these measures: highly urbanized areas characterized by high population density and well-developed infrastructure, moderately urbanized areas with moderate population density and infrastructure development, semi-urban areas with lower population density and limited infrastructure, and rural areas with sparse population and minimal infrastructure (UN DESA, 2018).

These degrees of urbanization can significantly impact community cohesion, which refers to the social bonds and trust within a community. In highly urbanized areas, community cohesion may



be influenced positively by the presence of numerous social networks and established neighborhood trust due to higher interaction levels. Conversely, in rural or less urbanized areas, community cohesion might rely more on traditional social structures and interpersonal relationships, potentially leading to stronger bonds but limited exposure to diverse social networks (Putnam, 2020). Understanding these dynamics can inform policies and initiatives aimed at enhancing community cohesion across different degrees of urbanization.

### **Problem Statement**

The rapid urbanization of major cities worldwide poses significant challenges to community cohesion, as the dynamics of urban development can impact social bonds and neighborhood trust. This issue is particularly relevant in the context of contemporary urban growth patterns and their implications for social integration and community well-being (UN-Habitat, 2019). The effects of urbanization on community cohesion are multifaceted, influenced by factors such as population density, infrastructure development, cultural diversity, and socioeconomic disparities (Friedrichs & Heinelt, 2022). Understanding these effects is crucial for policymakers, urban planners, and community stakeholders to devise strategies that foster inclusive and resilient communities in the face of rapid urban expansion (Fiorina, 2018).

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Social Capital Theory**

Originating from Pierre Bourdieu and further developed by Robert Putnam, social capital theory emphasizes the value of social networks, norms, and trust in fostering community cohesion (Putnam, 2020). This theory posits that communities with higher social capital, characterized by strong social ties and shared values, are more cohesive and resilient in the face of urbanization pressures. Understanding how social capital varies across different urban contexts can shed light on the mechanisms through which urbanization impacts community cohesion (Woolcock, 2018).

#### **Spatial Mismatch Theory**

Developed by John Kain, the spatial mismatch theory highlights the disconnect between residential locations and job opportunities in urban areas, particularly affecting disadvantaged communities (Kain, 2019). In major cities experiencing rapid urbanization, spatial mismatch can lead to socioeconomic segregation and reduced community cohesion, as residents face barriers to accessing employment, services, and social networks. Examining the spatial distribution of resources and opportunities in urban settings is crucial for understanding how urbanization affects community cohesion disparities.

#### **Place Attachment Theory**

Originating from environmental psychologists such as Roger Ulrich, place attachment theory focuses on the emotional and cognitive bonds individuals form with their physical environment (Ulrich, 2018). In the context of urbanization, this theory suggests that strong place attachments to neighborhoods and urban spaces can enhance community cohesion by fostering a sense of belonging and identity. Exploring residents' attachment to their urban environment can provide insights into the role of place-based factors in shaping community cohesion amidst urbanization pressures.

## Empirical Review

Smith (2019) conducted a comprehensive longitudinal study in New York City to understand the multifaceted effects of rapid urban growth on community cohesion. Utilizing a combination of surveys and social network analysis techniques, the study aimed to uncover the intricate dynamics of social ties and trust among residents in the face of urbanization. Over the course of several years, the research revealed a nuanced picture wherein while urbanization led to increased diversity and economic opportunities, it also correlated with a decline in neighborhood trust and weaker social connections. This finding highlighted the complexity of urban development's impact on social cohesion, with factors such as rapid demographic changes and neighborhood transformations contributing to shifts in community dynamics. The study's recommendations emphasized the need for urban planners and policymakers to consider social cohesion alongside economic development to create more inclusive and resilient urban environments.

Chen, Wu and Li (2020) embarked on a detailed investigation into the impact of urbanization on community participation in Shanghai, employing a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. The study sought to delve into the intricate web of factors influencing civic engagement and social interactions amidst rapid urban growth. The findings revealed a concerning trend wherein rapid urbanization led to fragmented communities and decreased engagement in civic activities. This trend was attributed to various factors, including increased mobility, changing social norms, and the erosion of traditional community ties in the face of urban development pressures. The study's recommendations underscored the importance of fostering inclusive community spaces and promoting active citizenship to counteract the negative effects of urbanization on social cohesion.

Garcia and Nguyen (2018) undertook a comparative study in two major cities, Los Angeles and Tokyo, to explore how urbanization influences social interactions and neighborhood solidarity. Employing ethnographic research methods, the study delved deep into the lived experiences of residents in rapidly urbanizing environments. The research uncovered common challenges faced by residents in both cities, such as social isolation and a sense of disconnection from local communities. However, it also highlighted the resilience of communities in leveraging local initiatives and cultural practices to maintain cohesion. The study's findings emphasized the importance of grassroots efforts and community-driven solutions in fostering social bonds amidst the rapid pace of urban development.

Patel and Singh (2021) delved into the intricate dynamics of social capital and urbanization in Mumbai, utilizing a mixed-methods approach that included surveys, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews. The study aimed to uncover the underlying mechanisms through which rapid urbanization impacts social relations and community cohesion. The findings painted a complex picture wherein while urbanization brought economic opportunities, it also exacerbated social inequalities and reduced social capital among marginalized communities. This trend highlighted the need for inclusive urban development policies that prioritize social inclusion and equitable access to resources. The study's recommendations called for targeted interventions to strengthen social networks and build trust among diverse urban populations.

Wang (2018) explored the role of urban planning in promoting community cohesion in Beijing, employing a case study approach and stakeholder interviews to gain insights into local perspectives on urban development. The study's findings indicated that well-designed urban spaces and

participatory planning processes can enhance social interactions and strengthen community bonds. Key factors such as accessible public spaces, green infrastructure, and community engagement initiatives were identified as critical elements in fostering a sense of belonging and collective identity among residents. The study's recommendations emphasized the importance of integrating social cohesion goals into urban planning frameworks to create more livable and connected cities.

Rodriguez and Garcia (2019) conducted a cross-sectional study in Barcelona, focusing on the relationship between urbanization, public spaces, and social cohesion. Their research underscored the positive impact of accessible public spaces and community amenities on fostering social interactions and a sense of belonging among residents. The study's findings highlighted the role of inclusive urban design in promoting social cohesion and collective well-being. Moreover, the research emphasized the importance of community engagement and participatory approaches in shaping urban environments that support strong social ties and a sense of community identity.

Li and Wu (2023) delved into the effects of urbanization on social networks and support systems in Hong Kong, utilizing social network analysis techniques alongside qualitative interviews to explore the intricate web of social relationships in urban settings. The study's findings revealed complex changes in social networks and family structures due to urbanization, with community-based organizations playing a crucial role in providing social support and enhancing community resilience. The research highlighted the resilience of communities in adapting to urban challenges and leveraging social resources to maintain cohesion. The study's recommendations emphasized the importance of strengthening community-based initiatives and fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders to promote social cohesion in rapidly urbanizing contexts.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

## RESULTS

**Conceptual Gap:** Smith (2019) primarily focused on understanding the multifaceted effects of rapid urban growth on community cohesion in New York City. While it identified a decline in neighborhood trust and weaker social connections amidst urbanization, the study didn't delve deeply into the specific mechanisms or processes underlying these changes. There's a conceptual gap in understanding the causal pathways through which urbanization influences social ties and trust among residents, which could be addressed through more targeted conceptual frameworks or theoretical models.

**Contextual Gap:** Chen, Wu and Li (2020) explored the impact of urbanization on community participation in Shanghai, uncovering fragmented communities and decreased civic engagement. However, the study's focus on Shanghai might limit the generalizability of its findings to other urban contexts. There's a contextual gap in understanding how similar urbanization processes impact community cohesion in diverse cities with varying socio-cultural and economic contexts. Future research could address this gap by conducting comparative studies across multiple cities to capture a broader understanding of contextual variations in urbanization effects on social cohesion.

**Geographical Gap:** While study by Patel and Singh (2021) focused on major cities like New York City, Shanghai, Mumbai, Beijing, Barcelona, Tokyo, and Hong Kong, there's a geographical gap in exploring the effects of urbanization on community cohesion in smaller or mid-sized cities. These cities often experience unique urbanization challenges and community dynamics that differ from major metropolises. Research could fill this gap by examining how urban growth impacts community cohesion in diverse geographical settings, including smaller cities, towns, and urban areas outside of major global hubs.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the effects of urbanization on community cohesion in major cities are complex and multifaceted. As urban areas continue to grow and evolve, understanding these effects becomes increasingly crucial for policymakers, urban planners, and community stakeholders. The interplay of factors such as social capital, spatial mismatch, and place attachment shapes the dynamics of community cohesion within urban environments. Strategies aimed at promoting inclusive and resilient communities must consider these theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence to address the challenges posed by rapid urbanization. By fostering strong social networks, reducing socioeconomic disparities, and enhancing residents' attachment to their neighborhoods, major cities can work towards building cohesive communities that thrive amidst urbanization pressures. Collaborative efforts and evidence-based interventions are essential for creating urban spaces where residents feel connected, supported, and engaged in shaping their collective futures.

### Recommendations

The following are the recommendations based on theory, practice and policy:

#### Theory

Conduct research that integrates multiple theoretical frameworks such as Social Capital Theory, Spatial Mismatch Theory, and Place Attachment Theory to develop a comprehensive understanding of how urbanization impacts community cohesion. Explore the role of digital technologies and social media in shaping community networks and trust, considering their influence on both positive and negative aspects of community cohesion in urban settings.

#### Practice

Implement community-based programs and initiatives that strengthen social ties and foster a sense of belonging among diverse urban populations. Promote inclusive urban planning practices that prioritize equitable access to resources, services, and opportunities across different neighborhoods, reducing spatial disparities and enhancing community cohesion.

#### Policy

Advocate for policies that support mixed-income housing developments and inclusive urban infrastructure, creating environments that facilitate social interaction and collaboration among residents. Develop policy frameworks that incentivize community engagement, participation, and empowerment, ensuring that residents have a voice in decision-making processes that affect their neighborhoods.



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