



# **Bonding Social Capital and Economic Resilience in Conflict-Induced Displacement: Evidence from a Relief Camp**

**Konthoujam Yaiphaba Meitei<sup>1</sup>**

## **ABSTRACT**

Internal displacement caused by ethnic conflict has created severe economic and social challenges for affected households in Manipur. The internally displaced persons (IDPs) find themselves in an extremely vulnerable situation because of the sudden deprivation of livelihood, assets, and social stability. In such fragile conditions, informal social relations often become an important source of survival and adaptation. This study examines the role of social capital in shaping the economic resilience of internally displaced persons living in relief camps in Manipur. The study examines the main dimensions of social capital, i.e, trust, reciprocity, and network size, and correlations with the measures of economic resilience, e.g, income continuity, fund shortages, savings, and confidence of financial recovery, using primary data consisting of 50 displaced people. These relationships are studied using descriptive statistics and tests. The results indicate that close mutual relationships and expanded social networks are important factors that minimize economic stress and enhance trust in restoring livelihoods. Education and marital status also influence economic vulnerability among displaced households. The paper has shown the significance of enhancing social networks at community levels and livelihood and education policies in order to ensure sustainable recovery among the IDPs who are living in the conflict-affected regions.

**KEYWORDS:** *Social capital, Economic resilience, internally displaced persons, Trust, Reciprocity*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Internal displacement resulting from conflict and communal violence has become a serious development concern in many regions of the world. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are individuals who are forced to leave their homes due to violence, insecurity, or disasters but remain within their national borders. In contrast to refugees, IDPs do not always have access to international attention and support despite having the same or even greater vulnerabilities. Displacement not only interferes with physical housing but also

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<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Economics, Manipur University



means a break in livelihoods, social relations, and economic security. Displacement disrupts not only physical shelter but also livelihoods, social relations, and economic security.

Manipur, a state in Northeast India, experienced an ethnic and communal conflict that has led to large-scale internal displacement. Several thousand families were displaced to live in relief camps with unpredictable living conditions and extremely limited economic opportunities. Income sources are lost, savings are depleted, and access to land, markets, and formal employment is heavily curtailed in most cases for displaced households. In such conditions, survival often depends on informal arrangements and community support rather than formal institutions. Economic resilience is the capacity of people or families to survive shocks and adjust to evolving circumstances, as well as slowly recover livelihoods.

The networks, trust, and norms of reciprocity are what constitute social capital, and in times of displacement, it turns out to be of critical importance. Such informal relationships assist individuals in sharing resources, information, and helping each other in times of crisis. According to Coleman and Putnam, classical theorists believe that social capital enhances economic performance by reducing uncertainty and facilitating collective action.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Research regarding forced displacement reveals a consistent pattern that IDPs have severe economic difficulties in the realms of unemployment, loss of income, and prolonged dependency on aid (Cernea, 1997; Ferris, 2011). Displacement is known to lead to negative occupational mobility, where people who have stable or skilled jobs move to informal jobs and to jobs that are low-paying. Psychological stress and social dislocation are the two aspects that add to these economic shocks.

The fallacy of displaced population to such challenges can be well understood with reference to the concept of social capital. According to Coleman (1990), social capital is resources that are embedded in social relationships and are useful in action. According to Putnam (2000), trust and cooperation are some of the key factors of social capital that enhance collective outcomes. Bourdieu (1986) defines capital as social as accumulated obligation that may be translated into economic gain.

In the context of Manipur, most existing studies focus on the political causes and humanitarian consequences of displacement. Very few studies examine how social relationships within camps influence economic resilience. This study builds on social capital theory to provide empirical evidence from a conflict-affected region in India.



This study attempts to fill this gap by examining the relationship between social capital and economic resilience among IDPs living in a relief camp in Manipur. The paper focuses on three key questions:

1. What is the nature of social capital among displaced persons in relief camps?
2. How does social capital influence economic resilience under displacement?
3. Do demographic factors such as education and marital status affect economic vulnerability?

By addressing these questions, the study contributes to a better understanding of how informal social mechanisms help displaced populations cope with economic hardship.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Study Area and Sample**

The study is based on primary data collected from a relief camp located in the Bishnupur district, Manipur. Due to time and access constraints, the sample consists of 50 internally displaced persons residing in the camp. Respondents were selected purposively to include variation in age, gender, education, and occupational background.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected using structured questionnaires covering demographic characteristics, social capital indicators, and economic conditions before and after displacement. In addition, informal interviews were conducted to better understand individual experiences, though the analysis presented here focuses mainly on quantitative data.

### **Variables and Tools**

Social capital is measured using three indicators:

1. **Trust** among camp members
2. **Reciprocity**, measured through resource sharing and collective problem-solving
3. **Network size**, measured by the number of people a respondent can rely on



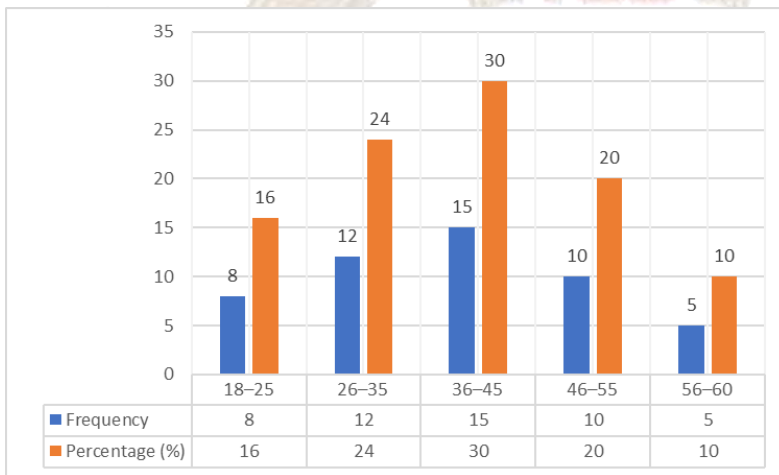
Economic resilience is assessed using:

1. Employment continuity or alternative income sources
2. Frequency of fund shortages
3. Savings and access to financial assistance
4. Confidence in rebuilding finances

Descriptive statistics are used to summarize patterns. Chi-square tests examine relationships between categorical variables, while one-way ANOVA is used to test differences in confidence levels across education groups.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### Demographic Profile of Respondents



**Figure 1: Age Distribution of Respondents**

Mean age: 38 years

Median age: 36 years

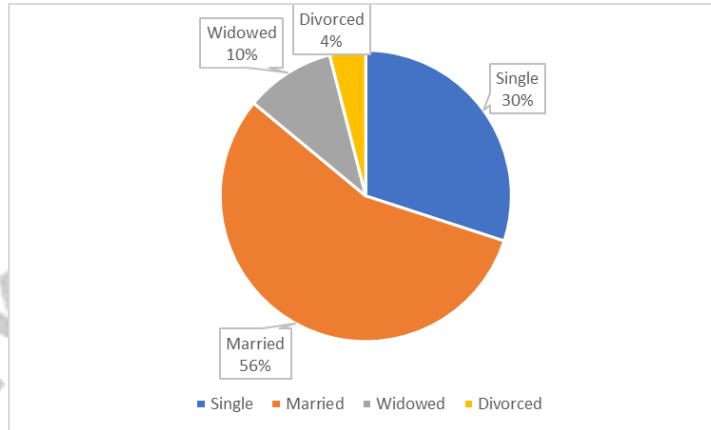
The age distribution shows that most respondents belong to the economically active age group, which highlights the economic loss caused by displacement.

**Table 1: Gender Distribution**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	25	50
Female	24	48
Other	1	2

**Figure 2: Marital Status**

**Table 2: Education Level**



<i>Education Level</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>No formal education</i>	7	14
<i>Primary</i>	10	20
<i>Secondary</i>	15	30
<i>Higher Secondary</i>	10	20
<i>Graduate &amp; above</i>	8	16

The demographic profile shows wide variation in education and household structure, which influences economic resilience.

**SOCIAL CAPITAL AMONG IDPS**

**Table 3: Trust Indicators**

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Mean Score</i>	<i>Mode</i>
<i>Trust members in times of need</i>	3.5	Fairly
<i>Comfort sharing personal information</i>	3.2	Neutral
<i>Belief in people keeping promises</i>	3.6	Often

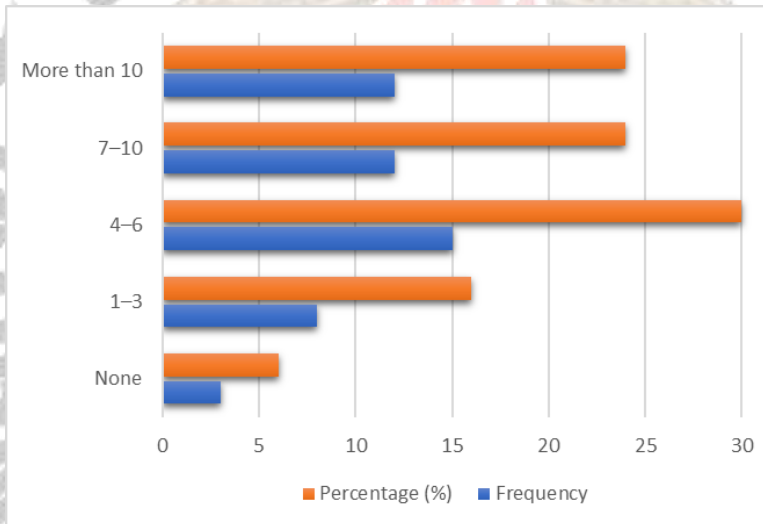
Trust levels are moderate. While many respondents rely on fellow camp members, complete trust is limited due to resource scarcity and uncertainty.

**Table 4: Reciprocity**

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Mean Frequency</i>	<i>Mode</i>
<i>Exchange of resources</i>	3.8	Often
<i>Expectation of reciprocation</i>	3.7	Agree
<i>Collective problem-solving</i>	3.9	Often

Reciprocity is relatively strong, indicating that mutual help plays a central role in daily survival.

**Figure 3: Network Size**



Most respondents depend on small to medium-sized networks, suggesting strong bonding social capital but limited external connections.

**ECONOMIC RESILIENCE OF IDPS**

**Table 5: Income and Employment Stability**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Able to work in a previous occupation	10	20
Found an alternative income source	18	36
Face fund shortage often/always	30	60



A large majority cannot continue their previous occupations, leading to unstable income.

**Table 6: *Savings and Financial Access***

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Have savings left	15	30
Access to financial institutions/NGOs	25	50
Availed assistance	20	40

The depletion of savings highlights economic vulnerability, though some access to assistance exists.

## **PERCEPTIONS AND FUTURE EXPECTATIONS**

**Table 7: *Hopefulness about Employment***

<b>Level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<i>Not hopeful</i>	5	10
<i>Slightly hopeful</i>	10	20
<i>Neutral</i>	12	24
<i>Fairly hopeful</i>	15	30
<i>Very hopeful</i>	8	16

Despite hardship, a significant proportion remains hopeful, reflecting psychological resilience.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of this paper offer a clear indication that social capital has an important role to play in determining the economic resilience of internally displaced individuals residing in relief camps in Manipur. Where formal institutions in the economy have been weak or unreachable, informal social relationships become important coping strategies. Trust, reciprocity, and network size serve as an alternative to a lack of market opportunity and state support, but this is not equally effective in all individuals or groups.

A rather high degree of reciprocity among displaced individuals is one of the most important lessons of the research. According to the table of reciprocity, one of the significant percentages of respondents regularly share resources and jointly solve a problem. This means that cooperative norms have not been totally disrupted by displacement. This is not the case as mutual reliance seems to have increased in the camps



owing to shared experiences of loss and uncertainty. These mutual exchanges are a form of informal insurance, which ensures that the household is able to cope with daily food, cash, and other shortages. This result is consistent with the argument put forward by Coleman that social capital helps in coordinated action, especially when they are constrained.

Trust levels are, however, moderate but not high. Although most respondents indicated that they trusted other camp members, who are often their peers, those who are always assured are very few. Such a doubting trust may be justified by the fact that the world of a relief camp is competitive, where resources are limited, and help is not guaranteed. Under such conditions, individuals may rely on others when necessary but remain hesitant to fully depend on them. This reflects a fragile form of social capital strong enough to support short-term survival, but not always sufficient for long-term economic planning or collective investment.

This interpretation is also supported by the network size analysis. The majority of respondents use small to medium-sized networks, which are usually close relatives or a few people they trust. There were very few respondents who said they had no support network, and that indicates that social isolation is not common. Nonetheless, such predominance of small networks also implies the absence of access to larger or external networks. This absence of bridging social capital limits access to new information, job opportunities, and institutional support outside of the camp. Consequently, social capital is mostly inward-looking and attentive to short-term requirements.

Economic resilience outcomes clearly reflect these social dynamics. The high frequency of fund shortages and depletion of savings indicates severe economic stress. Yet, the presence of alternative income sources among some respondents suggests adaptive behaviour. Most of the displaced people have been moving to informal and low-paid activities, which, in most cases, have enabled them to do so, with the help of social networks in the camp.

The discussion is further elaborated by the inferential analysis. The high correlation between marital status and lack of funds implies that the status of the household determines vulnerability. The respondents who are married or widowed will tend to undergo frequent cases of financial stress, perhaps because of increasing dependency or lowered earning power. This indicates that social capital does not operate uniformly across households and must be understood in relation to family responsibilities.



Similarly, the education-based differences in confidence revealed by the ANOVA analysis underscore the role of human capital in enhancing the effectiveness of social capital. The more educated respondents were found to be more certain about regaining their finances even during displacement. Education seems to enhance not just the ability to perform better in the economy but also psychological strength and the ability to resolve problems. This suggests that social capital and human capital interact, with education enabling individuals to better use their networks for economic recovery.

Overall, the discussion highlights that social capital among IDPs in Manipur is strong enough to support coping and survival, but insufficient on its own to ensure sustainable economic recovery. In the absence of external assistance, skill building, and institutional connections, the social capital may serve as a system of poverty management instead of overcoming it.

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The policy implications of this research are significant as far as policy design and interventions to assist internally displaced individuals in conflict-occupied zones, such as Manipur, are concerned. Resilience is a long-term process embedded in policies that simply aim at short-term relief. A more holistic approach is required, one that strengthens both livelihoods and social networks.

### **Livelihood and Employment-Oriented Interventions**

The fact that the percentage of people who could not pursue their former jobs was significant shows that employment-based rehabilitation is necessary urgently. The development programs on skills should be based on the current skills of the displaced individuals, and this may be in the form of agriculture-related skills, handicrafts, tailoring, service-related work, etc. Temporary training and certification can be used to assist the IDPs to reach the local labor markets once the conditions stabilize. The main focus should be on women, widows, and older displaced individuals, who face more obstacles to getting a job. Gender-sensitive training programs and flexible work opportunities can improve inclusion and income stability.

### **Community-Based Markets and Collective Enterprises**

The study shows strong reciprocity and collective action within camps. Community-based markets and cooperative enterprises can be promoted in order to take advantage of these strengths. Some of these IDPs are already manufacturing minuscule products like foodstuffs, handloom products, and household consumables. Establishing designated market spaces or periodic community markets can provide both income and dignity to displaced persons.



### **Financial Inclusion and Savings Mechanisms**

The large loss of savings and constant lack of funds are signs that there is a need to have easy access to financial services. IDPs can re-establish financial security through the use of community-based savings groups, rotating credit associations, and microfinance programs.

### **Education and Skill Enhancement**

Education has become one of the determinants of the belief in economic recovery. There is a need to have policies that provide continuous education to displaced children and opportunities for adult learning and professional training. Long-term resilience can be strengthened through adult literacy programs, training in digital skills, and entrepreneurship workshops.

### **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support**

Psychological well-being is associated with economic resilience. Psychosocial support and mental health services should be incorporated in the IDP programs to enhance personal well-being and overall resilience. Restoration of confidence and social cohesion could be done through counseling, peer-support groups, and community activities.

### **Long-Term Policy and Institutional Support**

Finally, durable solutions for IDPs require long-term policy commitment. Legal recognition, housing support, land access, and inclusion in development planning are essential for sustainable recovery. Strengthening institutional trust will also encourage displaced persons to invest in rebuilding their lives rather than remaining dependent on short-term aid.

### **CONCLUSION**

This paper has discussed how social capital influenced the economic resilience of internally displaced individuals in Manipur, under relief camps. The study established that trust, reciprocity, and social networks are very important in assisting IDPs to deal with economic hardship. Social capital provides an informal system of support, which minimizes vulnerability and enables individuals to survive on a day-to-day basis without the support of regular livelihoods and institutional systems.

Nevertheless, the results show apparent constraints, as well. Social capital is useful in dealing with short-term shocks, but it does not always result in the recovery of the economy in the long term. The displaced persons are limited in their capacity to get out of subsistence by small network sizes, low levels of education, and household responsibilities.



The paper highlights the necessity to shift the focus of relief-based solutions to integrated rehabilitation interventions that involve livelihood development, education, financial inclusion, and community empowerment. Positive policies that reward and expand on existing forms of social capital can be more effective, though they also need to overcome institutional obstacles to recovery. Despite the small size of the sample and the narrow and specific context of the relief camp, the study provides valuable information about the lived economics of displaced people in conflict areas.

Conclusively, the reestablishment of the economic status of internally displaced people in Manipur cannot be achieved by mere material support. It involves the reinforcement of social relationships, widening of opportunities, and reinstating dignity. With the assistance of community-based social capital and facilitating economic and institutional policies, one can turn displacement into a road to recovery and resilience as opposed to long-term vulnerability.

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