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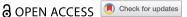
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ABSTRACT

This study examines citizens' sense of neighbourhood belonging in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, focusing on the State of Qatar. While much research about this issue has been conducted in developed countries, little is known about how citizens' 'stock' of social capital, religiosity and civic engagement affect their sense of belonging to their neighbourhood within GCC countries. In the present study, we address this question by analysing data from two waves of nationally representative surveys undertaken in Qatar, drilling down into the various dimensions of social capital and their effect on community attachment at the neighbourhood level. The results indicate that, even after controlling for a wide range of demographic variables, social capital has a strong effect on the nationals' sense of belonging to their communities. The results have implications for researchers with respect to the salience of social capital as a concept and for policy-makers concerned with building an integrated and diverse community that is inclusive of people from various backgrounds.

Introduction

More than anywhere else in the world, countries of the Arabian Gulf are dependent on foreign labour to sustain rapid economic growth and development. However, in Qatar, because of the infrastructure projects needed for hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup, the country has received an even greater influx of foreign workers (blue-collar and white-collar expatriates) in the past few years. The speed and scope of this increase may cause the local population to reassess the migrants' role and social impact. Most blue-collar expatriates live in collective housing located in remote areas, and are therefore more isolated from the nationals. In contrast, white-collar expatriates live in urban residential neighbourhoods, sometimes alongside Qatari nationals. The overall picture is of an abrupt demographic change and this has led to claims by some observers that nationals have become more insular and less civically engaged within their local communities and neighbourhoods.[1] In this paper, we tackle the question of how and to what extent Qatari nationals' 'stock' of social capital, religiosity and civic engagement affects their sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, and how it has been impacted by the system of employment adopted to expedite rapid transformation of their economy.

A sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods and community can be a powerful source of motivation, tolerance and active involvement for Qatari nationals. When residents have a great sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, they are more likely to be tolerant, welcoming, and invest their time and energy in improving their neighbourhoods.[2] In addition to welcoming guests, including in this case potential visitors and soccer fans for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, a strong sense of belonging to neighbourhoods can foster a positive outcome for health and quality of life,[3] and so constitutes an important community resource for all residents, particularly for the elderly.[4] However, the key is to ensure that the tools designed to reap this multitude of benefits do not overwhelm the neighbourhood residents to the point that they reject being involved altogether.

Qatar's recent socio-demographic and economic developments have accentuated the need to understand the factors that facilitate or hinder citizens' sense of belonging to their community. The issues related to sense of belonging, social cohesion and community action have been broadly studied in the USA and Europe through quantitative and qualitative research. In contrast, studies on Gulf countries have focused more on the impact of migrant workers, their remittances and relationships with members of their families in their respective home countries. Often, these studies are methodologically qualitative and idiographic. However, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand, both quantitative and qualitative work is required. In this context, the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) at Qatar University launched a systematic study linking nationals' religiosity and social-civic engagement with their attitudes towards expatriate workers. Two nationally representative surveys conducted in Qatar found that religiosity, social trust, and bridging social ties have a significant impact on Qatari nationals' sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods. This paper will address those results starting with a review of the literature, then building upon it to introduce a set of hypotheses buttressed by an analysis of data and findings. The paper concludes with a review of the larger implications and suggestions for future research.

Literature review

Many dimensions of social life such as trust, loyalty, social networks, religion, reciprocity and commonality, just to name a few, all encompass what social capital is. While much of the research on social capital has been heavily influenced by the works of Pierre Bourdieu,[5] James Coleman[6] and Robert Putnam,[7] Cloete[8] was the one to highlight two

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[2]See Stojicic's blog, The Importance of Residents' Sense of Belonging, Trust, and Power, https://www.rethinkhealth.org/Resource/the-importance-of-residents-sense-of-belonging-trust-and-power/.

[03]Cherry Russel, Brenda Hill & Meg Basser, "Older peoples' Lives in the Inner City," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 22, no. 1 (1998): 98–106 and Catherine Cubbin, Felicia LeClere & Gordon Smith, "Socioeconomic Status and Injury Mortality," *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health* 54, no. 7 (2000): 517–24.

[04]Kent Schwirian and Schwirian, "Neighbouring, Residential Satisfaction, and Psychological Well-Being in Urban Elders," *Journal of Community Psychology* 21, no. 4 (1993): 285–99.

[5]Pierre Bourdieu, "The forms of capital. (1986)," *Cultural theory: An anthology* 1 (2011): 81–93.

[6]James Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital,' *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1988): S95–S120.

[7]Robert Putnam, "The Prosperous Community," *The American prospect* 4, no. 13 (1993): 35–42 and Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," in *Culture and politics*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 223–34.

[08]Anita Cloete, "Social Cohesion and Social Capital: Possible Implications for the Common Good," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 35, no. 3 (2014): 1–6. See 2 http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v35i3.1331.

primary characteristics of social capital. First, it can be viewed as a public good or resource, since it is available to all and individuals cannot be prohibited from accessing it, and second, it is a type of human-made capital, which as such can either develop or dissolve depending on whether reciprocity exists among its users. Therefore, social capital is not about the individual, but focuses instead on the collective need of people with the ultimate purpose of improving their lives. Cloete further explains that the many concepts underpinning social capital are useful in describing social interactions and their potential benefits to the common societal good and despite the variety of conceptualizations of social capital, its main aspects include trust, social networks and reciprocity, which can result in further development of social capital.

When examining the various elements of social capital, scholars have suggested a variety of ways in which these elements can produce positive outcomes. The rest of this review will discuss these elements, which include loyalty, trust, honesty, passive and active participation, social and local networks (family and friend ties), as well as religion, commonality, and the many ways through which they impact and are impacted by community living.

Loyalty is essential for creating a sense of belonging among members of a community.[9] Temkin and Rohe[10] found loyalty and attachment to be key in neighbourhood belonging. Dekker[11] echoed this in his work when he noted that 'residents who identify with their neighbourhood have a higher probability than others of becoming active' in it.

Trust and honesty between members of a society lead to a greater sense of maintaining social capital. Establishing reciprocal trust and honesty between members of a neighbourhood or community provides the group with the tools necessary for resolving intra-communal concerns and disputes.[12] Diop et al. argue that this 'relationship centres on the belief that the second party will react positively to trust by delivering on the subject of trust in a material or sentimental manner'.[13] Thus, trust and honesty are an essential part of social capital, as they have the potential to generate positive outcomes and reduce conflict in a given society.

Actions encompass the manners in which members of the neighbourhood are aware of themselves, and of what others might say about them. This adds another layer to understanding social capital, linking together elements of trust and honesty. Having a sense of self-awareness of their actions in the neighbourhood affects whether or not others will display trust and honesty towards them, and the extent to which they will perceive them as an integral part of the neighbourhood.

Understanding the notion behind passive and active participation in the neighbourhood is important for conceptualizing neighbourhood belonging as well. Aspects of passive and active participation include volunteering, attendance (religious service or

[9]Karien Dekker, "Social Capital, Neighbourhood Attachment and Participation in Distressed Urban Areas. A Case Study in The Hague and Utrecht, the Netherlands," *Housing Studies* 22, no. 3 (2007): 355–79. DOI: 10.1080/02673030701254103 and John Hipp and Andrew Perrin, "Nested Loyalties: Local Networks' Effects on Neighbourhood and Community Cohesion," *Urban Studies* 43, no. 13 (2006): 2503'23.

[10]Kenneth Temkin & William Rohe, "Social Capital and Neighbourhood Stability: An Empirical Investigation," *Housing Policy Debate* 9, no. 1 (1998): 61–88.

[11]Dekker, *Social Capital, Neighbourhood Attachment and Participation in Distressed Urban Area*, 375.

[12]Margaret Levi & Laura Stoker, "Political Trust and Trustworthiness," *Annual review of political science* 3, no. 1 (2000): 475–507.

[13]Diop, Abdoulaye, Kien Trung Le, Trevor Johnston, and Michael Ewers, "Citizens' Attitudes Towards Migrant Workers in Qatar," *Migration and Development* 6, no. 1 (2017): 144–60, 69.

community events), and acts of giving for the communal benefit. Dekker defines participation as 'activities undertaken by residents with the aim of positively influencing the social and physical situation of the neighbourhood'.[14] Many influences can affect participation, such as socioeconomic factors (status, ethnicity, socio-demographic and housing conditions), social capital (trust, social networks and norms), and neighbourhood attachment (social attachment and spatial-emotional context).[15] For Dekker, neighbourhood attachment is innately related to participation. Once individuals come to identify with the neighbourhood and develop a sense of attachment, they become predisposed to participate in maintaining and improving their neighbourhood.

Hothi and Cordes found through their work with the Young Foundation Taskforces Project that the addition of service providers, voluntary organizations and local resident groups led to an increase in participation within the neighbourhood of Limehouse in London.[16] Over time, the Project saw an increase in participation within the neighbourhood and an increase in social capital amongst the residents. Wollebaek and Selle[17] found that when members of a community belong to several associations in a neighbourhood, they contributed to a positive outcome of social capital. Similarly, Lewicka[18] noted in a study in Poland that having place attachment leads to neighbourhood ties and participation in the community, and vice-versa. The discussion on passive and active participation in a neighbourhood, as shown in Lewicka's work, exemplifies the importance of encompassing different elements of social capital in understanding neighbourhood belonging.

Family and friendship ties represent another vital aspect of social capital. Ferlander[19] divided these local social networks into different levels, as either horizontal or vertical, both of which include formal and informal ties. First, with horizontal ties, he defined voluntary associations as a type of formal ties, whereas informal ones include family, relatives, friends, neighbours and colleagues. Vertical formal ties are reflected in churches, work hierarchies and network ties between citizens and civil servants, whereas vertical informal ties refer to criminal networks, clan relations and street gangs. Ferlander reflects on the literature on local social networks and the effect of formal and informal ties, which then leads to the discussion of strong and weak ties within these networks. Strong ties refer to intimate ties, while weak ties are considered non-intimate. Strong ties are important to social capital, which will be discussed in detail when examining the context of Qatar, as most Qataris live in neighbourhoods surrounded by their families. Having strong ties is an asset in the neighbourhood, as those with family members living in close proximity enjoy a better sense of belonging to it.

Religion is also a vital part of social capital, as Diop et al.[20] found in their research on religiosity, social capital and civic engagement in Qatar. A mosque in a neighbourhood

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[14]Dekker, *Social Capital, Neighbourhood Attachment and Participation in Distressed Urban Area*, 357.
[15]See Dekker, *Social Capital, Neighbourhood Attachment and Participation in Distressed Urban Area*, for more on the influences on participation.
[16]M. Hothi, and C. Cordes, "Understanding Neighbourliness and Belonging," (2010).
[17]Dag Wollebaek and Per Selle, "Does Participation in Voluntary Associations Contribute to Social Capital? The Impact of Intensity, Scope, and Type," *Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2002): 32–61.
[18]Maria Lewicka, "Ways to Make People Active: The Role of Place Attachment, Cultural Capital, and Neighbourhood Ties," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 25, no. 4 (2005): 381–95.
[19]Sara Ferlander, "The Importance of Different Forms of Social Capital for Health," *Acta Sociologica* 50, no. 2 (2007): 115–28.
[20]Abdoulaye Diop, Trevor Johnston, Kien Trung Le, and Yaojun Li, "Donating Time or Money? The Effects of Religiosity and Social Capital on Civic Engagement in Qatar," *Social Indicators Research* 138, no. 1 (2018): 297–315.

brings members together and creates a sense of belonging. Most research on this matter has been done on Muslims within countries where they constitute a minority, such as the US,[21] where research typically looks at religiosity, mosque attendance, and political participation. Some of the works of Diop et al. and Sarkissian[22] aim to shed light on this matter within Muslim majority countries, with a specific focus on various levels of community participation. Sarkissian found particularly strong evidence suggesting that those who participate in the mosque are more likely to engage with the community. The work of Lim and Putnam further emphasizes the importance of religiosity to social capital, as people with strong religious ties have greater life satisfaction and well-being, especially with friendships developed within their congregation.[23] Thus, those who are more religious and attend mosque regularly have a strong sense of belonging to their neighbourhood.

Lastly, commonality among neighbours is also key for understanding social capital and neighbourhood belonging. Commonality is essential in neighbourhood belonging[24] as it indicates that those who share the same beliefs and values produce a sense of community amongst themselves.[25] The idea of commonality is very much in line with the other elements mentioned above.

After examining the core elements of social capital, it is important to also discuss in general the benefits for undertaking its study. Hothi and Cordes note that studying and understanding social capital is crucial for improving wellbeing, mutual aid between people, social control and crime cutting, and improving life chances.[26] These benefits enable further formation of social capital in the neighbourhood, and allow for those who live in a neighbourhood to feel a sense of belonging. The rationale and need to further study social capital and neighbourhood belonging is that the work on the subject has mostly focused on a Western perspective, while remaining understudied in the developing world. This paper seeks to advance the understanding of social capital, and neighbourhood belonging in the Middle East, more specifically in the context of Qatar, a traditionally conservative and tribal nation in the Arabian Gulf.

Previous studies on social capital and neighbourhood belonging in the GCC have already tackled some important dimensions worth reflecting on. Researchers such as Alshuwaikhat argued that urban planning in the twenty-first century is in need of change to enable a greater communal sense amongst the residents.[27] When planning future neighbourhoods, he noted the usefulness of understanding cultural and religious factors as a way to increase public participation. Similarly, Selim and Gamal found that neighbourhoods and residential communities in the 1970s were in need of creating a greater

[21] Amaney Jamal, "Reassessing Support for Islam and Democracy in the Arab World? Evidence from Egypt and Jordan," *World Affairs* 169, no. 2 (2006): 51–63 and K. Dana, M.A. Barreto, and K.A. Oskooii, "Mosques as American institutions: Mosque attendance, Religiosity and Integration into the Political System among American Muslims," *Religions* 2, no. 4: 504–24.

[22] Ani Sarkissian, "Religion and Civic Engagement in Muslim Countries," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 51, no. 4 (2012): 607–22.

[23] Chaeyoon Lim and Robert Putnam, "Religion, Social Networks, and Life Satisfaction," *American Sociological Review* 75, no. 6 (2010): 914–33.

[24] Margot Breton, "Neighbourhood Resiliency," *Journal of Community Practice* 9, no. 1 (2001): 21–36.

[25] David McMillan and David Chavis, "Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory," *Journal of Community Psychology* 14, no. 1 (1986): 6–23.

[26] Hothi & Cordes, *Understanding neighbourliness and belonging*, 8.

[27] Alshuwaikhat, *Planning the 21st Century Urban Neighbourhood: Learning from Previous Concepts* (1999).

sense of belonging.[28] By examining case studies from Saudi Arabian small towns, Al-Hathloul and Mughal concluded that rapid urbanization can indeed create a sense of belonging and new identity.[29] Hasan found that small-gated communities in Bahrain showcased a high sense of community due to various motivational and living experiences, as well as social relationships.[30] On the other hand, Ahmed found that the UAE's newly constructed social housing for 'vertical communities', i.e. residents of multi-storey apartment buildings, is designed in a way that does not encourage the realization of social capital, suggesting the decision-makers' lack of appreciation for the communal belonging.[31] Upon reviewing previous research in the GCC, it becomes evident that the focus has mostly been on the concept of housing policy, with research on the sense of belonging and social capital employed to critically examine existing housing policies and propose improvements for new housing development. However, not much of the research has been done on the relationship of social capital and the determinants of neighbourhood belonging in the GCC. Through the example of Qatar, this study seeks to contribute to the literature by showcasing the importance of social capital research in the GCC region, for policymakers and academics alike.

Qatar provides an interesting case for studying neighbourhood belonging and social capital, as the majority of Qataris live surrounded by extended families in tight-knit neighbourhood communities. Qatari nationals represent a minority in their own country, as the population is mostly comprised of expatriates from other countries residing in Qatar for work purposes. Most white-collar expatriates live in compound housing facilities, which are gated communities with little resemblance to the openness of a traditional neighbourhood, while some do reside in neighbourhoods shared with Qatari nationals. Qataris, on the other hand, represent a rather monolithic community, as almost all of them share the same racial and religious affiliation of being Arab (Sunni) Muslims. It, therefore, comes as no surprise that a traditionally conservative community as such appears to be 'apathetic or even antipathetic towards outsiders', and prefers to look inwards.[32] In addition, being tribally affiliated highlights strong family ties within the Qatari community, further reinforcing the inclination to remain detached from external social groups.[33]

However, when looking at neighbourhood belonging as an indicator of local embeddedness or meso-level situational social capital, Diop et al.[34] found that Qataris with a strong sense of social capital tend to show acceptance of non-Arabs and Westerners as neighbours. Investigating neighbourhood belonging and social capital in the context of Qatar allows for a better understanding of the Qatari culture and socioeconomic environment, and the extent to which Qataris are inclusive when they enjoy a sense of social capital. The goal of this paper is to address neighbourhood inclusiveness, and

[28]Selim and Gamal, "Neighborhoods & Residential Communities: The Case of Al-Ain-UAE," (In Proceedings of Housing Symposium, vol. 3, 2007), 343–61.

[29]Al-Ahthloul and Mughal, "Creating Identity in New Communities: Case Studies from Saudi Arabia," *Landscape and Urban Planning* 44, no. 4 (1999): 199–218.

[30]Hassan, "The Sense of Community in Gated Communities: Case of Awali Town, Bahrain".

[31]Ahmed, "Sustainable 'Vertical' Social Housing in UAE: Design for Boosting Social Capital," *Smart, Sustainable and Healthy Cities* (2014): 61.

[32]Diop et al., *Social Capital and Citizens' Attitudes towards Migrant Workers*, 68.

[33]A. Al-Kathim, *Residents and Immigrant Workforce in Qatari Society, Interaction Patterns and Perceptions* (Cario, Egypt: Hajar Publishing, 1991).

[34]Diop et al., *Social Capital and Citizens' Attitudes towards Migrant Workers*.

whether or not Qataris still prefer to adhere to their traditional and tribal ways of living, or have changed in the face of recent sociodemographic shifts and become more open and inclusive.

Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, we have developed a number of hypotheses in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of Qataris' sense of neighbourhood belonging and the impact of religiosity, social capital and civic engagement. For this purpose, we estimate a series of logistic regression models. For the analysis, the base model (*Model 1*) contains individual, household, and regional characteristics as control variables, including gender, marital status, education, age, employment, household income, region and year of survey.

   Model 2 introduces attitudinal and behavioural dimensions of religiosity. The former is self-reported religiosity. All respondents were asked to describe for themselves whether they were very religious, moderately religious, somewhat religious, or not religious at all. This variable is dichotomized, with 1 indicating 'very religious' and 0 otherwise. For the behavioural dimension of religiosity, respondents were asked to report how often they go to a place of worship, ranging from daily, more than once a week, once a week, once a month, more than once a month, a few times a year, to seldom or never. This variable is also dichotomized, with 1 for daily and more than once a week, and 0 for other responses. Drawing on our discussions above, we formulate our hypotheses as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Religiosity is positively related with Qatari nationals' sense of belonging to a neighbourhood, with greater self-reported religiosity associated with stronger sense of neighbourhood belonging.

The third model, *Model 3*, tests whether general trust and trust in Arabs is associated with Qataris' sense of neighbourhood belonging. General trust and trust in Arabs were rated on a 0–10 point scale.

Hypothesis 2: General trust and trust in Arabs are associated with sense of neighbourhood belonging, with higher trust associated with stronger sense of neighbourhood belonging.

The fourth model, *Model 4*, introduces elements of family and friendship networks into the model. The family network tests whether the family inward-orientation of Qataris has a negative impact on their sense of neighbourhood belonging, and the friendship network tests whether the diversity of close friends is associated with a positive impact on Qatari nationals' sense of neighbourhood belonging. About family inward-orientation, respondents were asked how often they get together with family members including siblings or extended kin for a social event or family occasion. Responses with 'daily' and 'more than once a week' frequencies are coded as 1 and other responses as 0. As for friendship networks, the variable is coded as 1 if respondents have friends of diverse ethnic backgrounds, including Qataris, Arabs, Westerners or friends living in other countries, and 0 otherwise. This leads us to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3.1: *Inward-family orientation is associated with weaker sense of neighbourhood belonging among Qatari nationals.*

Hypothesis 3.2: *Diversity of close friends is associated with stronger sense of neighbourhood belonging among Qatari nationals.*

The fifth model, *Model 5*, tests whether requiring out-groups to adopt Qatari customs has a strong or weak impact on Qataris' sense of neighbourhood belonging. All respondents were asked to rate the level of importance for out-groups to adopt Qatari customs as part of the requirements for somebody seeking Qatari citizenship. Responses for this question are coded as 1 for very important and 0 for other responses.

Hypothesis 4: *Qataris' importance attached to out-groups adopting Qatari customs is associated with stronger sense of neighbourhood belonging among Qatari nationals.*

Model 6 introduces elements of civism and tests whether volunteering for civic organizations or donating to charities has a positive impact on Qataris' sense of neighbourhood belonging. All respondents were asked whether they had volunteered for civic organizations and whether they had donated to charities. Both questions used the twelve-month period preceding the data collection as a time reference for each wave. The two variables are also dichotomized, with 1 representing positive and 0 negative responses.

Hypothesis 5: *High degree of civism is associated with stronger sense of neighbourhood belonging among Qatari nationals.*

Model 7 adds the respondents' perception of living in his/her neighbourhood, including how important it is for him/her to live in the neighbourhood, whether he/she has a lot in common with his/her neighbours; and whether his/her neighbours are honest or not. The model also includes the respondent's perception of how his/her actions are viewed by his/her neighbours and whether he/she took part in a neighbourhood project. These questions are grouped to form the neighbourhood cohesion and engagement items. With the exception of the 'taking part in a neighbourhood project' variable, which was a yes/no question, the rest were rated on a four-point agree/disagree scale. These questions were dichotomized with 1 representing 'agree' response, and 0 otherwise. 'Taking part in a neighbourhood project' is dichotomized as well, with 1 representing 'yes' and 0 otherwise.

Hypothesis 6: *A positive sense of neighbourhood cohesion is associated with stronger sense of neighbourhood belonging among Qatari nationals.*

Hypothesis 7: *A positive perception about neighbourhood engagement is associated with stronger sense of neighbourhood belonging among Qatari nationals.*

Data and results

Our analysis draws on data from the first two waves of the survey '*From Fareej to Metropolis: A Social Capital Survey of Qatar*' conducted by the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) at Qatar University in 2011 and 2015, respectively. Both waves were funded by Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development. The survey adopted multi-stage stratified probability sampling and collected information on representative samples of the Qatari population focused on three groups: Qatari citizens, high-skilled migrant workers (white-collar expatriates), and low-skilled migrant workers (blue-collar expatriates). Overall, 4,821 interviews were completed between the two waves (2,268 in the year 2011 and 2,553 in the year 2015) including a total of 1,631 Qatari nationals, 1,605 high-skilled workers, and 1,585 low-skilled migrant workers. To explore the effects of social capital, religiosity and civic engagement on Qataris' sense of neighbourhood belonging, we restrict our analysis to data on the Qatari citizen sub-samples. The response rates were high in both waves of data collection (61% and 59%, respectively). The data were weighted to account for selection and non-response, with sampling errors of ±3.4 and ± 3.1 percentage points for the two waves, respectively. This calculation takes into account the design effects (i.e., the effects from weighting, stratification, and clusters). The analysis used in this paper is based on the weighted data from these two waves, which account for probabilities of selection and non-response.

The survey asked a variety of questions on preferences from which we selected one as our outcome variable—sense of belonging to the neighbourhood. More specifically, respondents were asked whether they strongly/somewhat agree or disagree with the statement: '*I feel accepted as a member of this neighbourhood*'. This variable is dichotomized—1 for strongly agree, and 0 for somewhat agree and disagree (strongly/somewhat)—and is used as our dependent variable in this analysis using logit models (further analysis using ordinal logit models yielded essentially the same patterns).

Our explanatory variables are summarized in Table 1. Results from the substantive analyses are presented in Table 2 with regard to Qataris' sense of belonging to their neighbourhood. Data in the latter table pertain to Average Marginal Effects. At the overall level, eight out of 10 Qataris (81%) strongly agree that they feel accepted as members of their neighbourhoods, while two out of 10 Qataris (19%) somewhat agree or disagree (somewhat or strongly) with the same statement.

As our aim in this paper is to explain the socio-cultural determinants of Qataris' sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, we would make exposition of the effects of our independent variables in the different models. We have also conducted prior analyses on bivariate associations and found that, except for the demographic variables to some extent, all our independent variables are significantly associated with Qatari nationals' sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods. To save space, we thus move directly to the multivariate analyses as shown in Table 2.

With regard to individual and household characteristics, we can see that, in terms of net effects, most variables in this domain (gender, age, education, marital, employment and financial status) do not have notable effects. None of the variables are significant with regard to strong feelings of neighbourhood belonging in any of the seven models in

Table 1. Dimensions and indicators.

Dimensions	Indicators
Demographic	• Individual characteristics • Household characteristics • Year of survey • Municipalities
Religiosity	• Self-reported religiosity • Frequency of going to places of worship
Trust	• Trust in Qataris • Trust in Arabs
Networks	• Frequency of getting together with family members • Diversity of close personal friends
Qatari Identity	• Preferences of 'adopting the customs of Qatar' for somebody seeking citizenship of Qatar
Civism	• Volunteering to organizations over the past year • Donating to charitable organizations over the past year • Passive membership to organizations • Active membership to organizations
Neighbourhood cohesion and engagement	• It is very important to me to live in this neighbourhood. • I feel I have a lot in common with the people who live in my neighbourhood. • Most people in my neighbourhood are basically honest and can be trusted. • I care about what others in my neighbourhood think of my actions • In the last six months, have you taken part in a neighbourhood activity?

Table 2 (with the sole exception of richer families having stronger feelings of being members of their neighbourhood in Model 7, and females being more likely to feel accepted as members of their neighbourhood as compared to males in Models 3, 4, and 5). About regional differences, Qataris residing in Umm Slal, Al Khor and Dhekra, Al Shamal and other municipalities have weaker feelings of being accepted as members of their neighbourhood as compared to those residing in the municipality of Doha (Table 2). These results suggest that Qataris residing in Doha are more likely to strongly agree that they feel accepted as members of their neighbourhood. This is an unexpected result, as Doha municipality is urban and more heterogeneous in its socio-economic composition as compared to other municipalities.

To evaluate the impact of religiosity we use attitudinal and behavioural measures. Our attitudinal measure is the respondent's self-reported level of religiosity, which can take one of three values: 'somewhat', 'moderate', or 'very'. We also consider a behavioural measure of religiosity, whether an individual performs their fajr (dawn) prayers daily. This variable is dichotomized to divide the sample into those respondents who report performing their fajr prayers on daily basis, and those who report otherwise. Prayer is one of the five pillars of Islam; among the daily prayers, fajr or dawn prayer is particularly significant as it is performed before the sunrise, making its daily practice more onerous when compared to other prayers later in the day, thus those who commit to it daily are usually perceived as more devout followers. We find a strong and positive association with Qatari nationals' sense of belonging to their neighbourhood and the behavioural measure of religiosity, with religious attendance being significant (at 0.1 level), indicating that Qatari nationals who attend fajr prayers are more likely to have a greater sense of neighbourhood belongings. The results also indicate that the behavioural measures of religiosity are much more predictive than simple attitudes. Attending fajr prayers gives worshippers the opportunity to meet with their neighbours and discuss matters and current affairs relevant to the neighbourhood. This, in turn, reinforces worshippers' connectedness and sense of belonging to their neighbourhood.

Table 2. Average marginal effects (AME) of Qataris' sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods.

Variables	Model1	Model2	Model3	Model4	Model5	Model6	Model7
Male	2.6	−5.1	−5.9 [c]	−6.4 [c]	−6.7 [c]	−5.2	−4.5
Married	−1.0	−1.3	−1.5	−2.0	−1.4	−2.6	−2.6
Secondary	−0.3	0.2	0.4	0.0	−0.2	−0.8	2.9
Tertiary	−4.5	−3.9	−4.1	−4.6	−5.2	−6.6[b]	−3.6
Aged 31–44	1.7	1.9	2.8	2.8	2.6	2.0	1.0
Aged 45+	2.2	1.7	1.9	1.7	1.8	0.3	−4.3
Employed	0.1	−0.6	−0.1	0.0	−0.7	−2.8	−0.5
Household income ≥50,000QAR	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.9	1.6	3.8 [c]
Living in Al Rayyan	−4.1	−3.9	−4.3	−4.0	−4.8	−3.7	−2.8
Living in Wakra	3.4	2.8	2.7	2.4	2.7 [c]	2.8	1.6
Living in other areas	−7.5 [c]	−7.5 [c]	−7.7 [c]	−8.0 [c]	−8.7 [c]	−9.3[b]	−8.7[a]
Year of survey (2015)	−1.3	−1.1	−1.4	−1.3	−1.7	−1.0	1.2
Religiosity		2.4	2.3	2.2	1.8	2.5	2.8
Religious attendance		10.8[a]	10.1[a]	11.4[a]	11.0 [a]	11.9[a]	6.4[b]
Getting together with family and kin			6.5[b]	6.5[b]	6.3[b]	6.4[b]	0.5
Diversity of friends			5.4[b]	5.7 [b]	7.1 [a]	6.2 [b]	3.6 [c]
Social media (frequent users)			−1.5	−1.5	−2.2	−2.4	−5.3 [c]
Social media (less frequent users)			−4.0	−4.5	−4.1	−4.1	−3.5
Adopting Qatari customs				7.3[a]	6.1[a]	4.1[b]	3.5 [c]
Trust in Qatari					2.2[a]	2.3[a]	1.1[b]
Trust in Arabs					0.0	−0.2	−0.1
Passive membership						3.8	2.9
Active membership						3.8	4.6[b]
Volunteering						−0.8	−3.9
Donations						13.5 [a]	7.6[a]
Importance living in this neighbourhood							14.3[a]
Have a lot in common with neighbours							5.1[b]
Honesty of neighbours							6.2[a]
One's actions in the neighbourhood							21.6[a]
Took part on a neighbourhood project							7.6[a]
Variables	*Model1*	*Model2*	*Model3*	*Model4*	*Model5*	*Model6*	*Model7*
Wald CHI-SQ	13.60	24.24	36.66	48.34	71.34	95.34	261.19
Pseudo R2	0.011	0.021	0.032	0.044	0.063	0.090	0.321
n	1458	1450	1441	1419	1398	1382	1362

[a] $p < .01$, [b] $p < .05$, [c] $p < .10$

The average marginal effects are shown in percentage points. Reference categories are female, non-married, with primary education, age under 30, non-employed, household income ≤ 50,000 QAR, living in Doha, survey year 2011, less religious, with less bonding and bridging ties, less desirous of foreigners to adopt Qatari customs, less volunteering and donating, and less attached to the neighbourhood. 1 QAR = 0.27 US Dollar.

As discussed above, trust is viewed in much of the social capital scholarship as a vital ingredient of social interaction that generates mutual benefits.[35] Trust has a strong predictive power in neighbourhood sense of belonging. Overall, Qataris exhibit different levels of trust towards the different subgroups that comprise the country's expatriate population. Though this level of trust has increased significantly between the two waves, it is much higher for Qataris than for Arabs and Westerners in general. Namely, on a 0 to 10-point scale, Qataris' trust of other Qataris increased from 8.02 in 2011 to 8.36 in 2015 and that of Arabs increased from 6.18 in 2011 to 6.66 in 2015, while trust of Westerners increased from 3.57 in 2011 to 4.63 in 2015.

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[35]See Coleman, *Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital*; Putnam, *The Prosperous Community*; Francis Fukuyama, "*Trust: The social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*" (No. D10 301 c. 1/c. 2., Free Press Paperbacks, 1995) and Michael Woolcock, "Social Capital and Economic Development: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis and Policy Framework," *Theory and society* 27, no. 2 (1998): 151–208.

Family and friendship networks seem to play an important role. Family inward-orientation has no significant impact in the last model, indicating that strong bonds among family members tend to make Qatari nationals less inclined to have a greater sense of neighbourhood belonging. Whereas the impact is significant in earlier models (3, 4, 5 and 6), the effect becomes non-significant with model 7. By contrast, we find that bridging social capital, as indicated by diversity of friendship networks, tends to make Qataris have a greater sense of neighbourhood belonging. On the other hand, the effect is fully significant for models 3–7.

With respect to the importance Qataris attach to out-groups adopting Qatari customs as a requirement for obtaining citizenship, the variable is significant, but to a lesser extent in the final model (model 7). This indicates that Qataris who have a strong desire for people seeking citizenship of Qatar to adopt their customs as a prerequisite are more likely to have a greater sense of neighbourhood belonging as compared to their counterparts.

Existing studies of social capital highlight the role of a strong civil society, through which individuals who actively participate in political and social life learn how to work with others to solve collective problems.[36] In the process of doing so, they become more open-minded, tolerant, trusting and trustworthy, as well as more welcoming to fellow citizens and people from other countries.[37] Given this, we might expect Qataris who volunteer and/or donate to charity and other types of organizations to exhibit a stronger sense of neighbourhood belonging. However, as evident in the results (models 6 and 7), while volunteering has no significant impact, donating to charity plays a significant role in Qatari nationals' sense of neighbourhood belonging.[38] With respect to participation in organizations, only active membership has a significant role in the last model (model 7). This constitutes an acknowledgement of the role of civic engagement in the Qatari society and underlines the role of active participation as compared to passive participation.

A number of variables are included in the models to represent an indicator of local embeddedness or meso-level/situational social capital, which is believed to foster feelings of tolerance and acceptance[39] as well as great sense of neighbourhood belonging among Qatari nationals. These included five (5) items, four of which are rated on a four-point agree/disagree scale: '*It is very important to me to live in this neighbourhood*'; '*I feel I have a lot in common with the people who live in my neighbourhood*'; '*Most people in my neighbourhood are basically honest and can be trusted*'; '*I care about what others in my neighbourhood think of my actions*'. The last item is a yes/no question about taking part in a neighbourhood activity in the last six months preceding the survey: '*In the last six months, have you taken part in a neighbourhood activity?*' Agree and disagree responses in

[36]See Dekker, *Social Capital, Neighbourhood Attachment and Participation in Distressed Urban Area*, 372; M. Hothi, and C. Cordes, "Understanding Neighbourliness and Belonging," (2010) and George Galster, "Investigating Behavioural Impacts of Poor Neighbourhoods: Towards New Data and Analytic Strategies".

[37]See Putnam, *Bowling alone: America's Declining Social Capital*; Amaney Jamal, "Reassessing support for Islam and democracy in the Arab world? Evidence from Egypt and Jordan," *World Affairs* 169, no. 2 (2006): 51–63; Yaojun Li, Mike Savage, and Alan Warde, "Social Mobility and Social Capital in Contemporary Britain," *The British Journal of Sociology* 59, no. 3 (2008): 391–411 and Diop et al., *Citizens' Attitudes Towards Migrant Workers in Qatar*.

[38]See Abdoulaye Diop, Trevor Johnston, Kien Trung Le, and Yaojun Li, "Donating Time or Money? The Effects of Religiosity and Social Capital on Civic Engagement in Qatar," Social Indicators Research 138, no. 1 (2018): 297–315.

[39]See Yaojun Li, Andrew Pickles, and Mike Savage, "Social Capital and Social Trust in Britain," *European Sociological Review* 21, no. 2 (2005): 109–123 and Abdoulaye Diop, Ashley E. Jardina, Mark Tessler, and Jill Wittrock, "Antecedents of Trust among Citizens and Non-citizens in Qatar," *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 18, no. 1 (2017): 183–202.

the four items were dichotomized, as well as the yes/no responses in the last item, and all were included in the model.

As expected, importance for living in the neighbourhood plays a significant role in Qataris' sense of belonging. People who believe that it is very important for them to live in their given neighbourhood are more likely to have a greater sense of belonging as compared to others. These people may see themselves as more emotionally attached to their neighbourhood and may have a greater sense of social commitment to participate in their neighbourhood's activities. This, in turn, can create a nexus of opportunities to engage and socialize with others.[40] In fact, those who identify themselves as having a lot in common with their neighbours have a higher probability of having a greater sense of neighbourhood belonging. When residents identify themselves with neighbours and their neighbourhood, it may lead to an increase in their participation in neighbourhood activities.[41]

Qatari nationals who perceive their neighbourhoods as composed of honest and trustworthy people are also more likely to have a greater sense of belonging. Though neighbourhood project activities are not common in Qatar, overall, Qatari nationals who think that residents' perceptions of their actions are very important are more likely to participate in such neighbourhood activities (16% compared to 11%). Although participation in neighbourhood activities is not *a sine qua non* for neighbourhood attachment, it can foster responsibility and interactions among residents and hence increase their attachment to it.

Conclusion

In this paper, we attempted to identify the role of social capital, religiosity and civic engagement on citizens' sense of neighbourhood belonging in a context of a Muslim majority country with a particularly large proportion of transient populations of foreign-born residents. Our motivation is justified by the limited literature on the topic within the GCC in general and in Qatar in particular, contrary to the Western, developed world, such as the USA and Europe. We have carried out what we believe is the first systematic study on Qatari nationals' sense of belonging to their neighbourhood. We used a sense of neighbourhood belonging as an indicator of tolerance and openness in a highly religious and conservative social and diverse context. Drawing on data from nationally representative samples and using a whole range of socio-demographic and cultural variables, including civic engagement and bridging and bonding social ties as well as social trust as explanatory variables, we have obtained some important findings.

Overall, while not negating the importance of socio-economic factors, we do find that trust and social engagement in terms of diversity of friendship networks, active membership in organizations, and donations to charitable organizations tend to result in higher sense of neighbourhood belonging, and hence are seeds for tolerance, acceptance, and

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[40]Meredith Minkler and Nina Wallerstein, "Part One: Introduction to Community-Based Participatory Research," In *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003): 5–24.

[41]See Anne Brodsky, Patricia J. O'Campo, and Robert E. Aronson, "PSOC in Community Context: Multi-Level Correlates of a Measure of Psychological Sense of Community in Low-Income, Urban Neighbourhoods," *Journal of Community Psychology* 27, no. 6 (1999): 659–679; George Galster, "Investigating Behavioural Impacts of Poor Neighbourhoods: Towards New Data and Analytic Strategies," *Housing Studies* 18, no. 6 (2003): 893–914 and Minkler and Wallerstein, *Part One: Introduction to Community-Based Participatory Research*.

accommodation. Though at the bivariate level most socio-demographic attributes are significantly associated with Qataris' sense of belonging, net effects show that demographic, economic and educational differences do not have salient effects. Unlike attitudinal religiosity, which does not have marked effects on Qatari nationals' sense of belonging (i.e. it was not significant), behavioural religiosity (worship practice) plays a significant role.

Similarly, bridging and bonding social capital play different roles. Bridging social ties in terms of diversity of friends plays a significant role in fostering a greater sense of neighbourhood belonging, while bonding social ties were not significant in the final model. In addition, importance of living in the neighbourhood, taking part in neighbourhood project activities, how one's actions in the neighbourhood are viewed by neighbours, having a lot in common with neighbours, and the perceived honesty of one's neighbours, all play a significant role in Qatari nationals' sense of neighbourhood belonging.

Findings of the positive effects of social capital on Qatari nationals' sense of neighbourhood belonging could be very useful in informing authorities and policymakers in Qatar about appropriate measures necessary for successful physical and social community planning. As the country is striving to become more welcoming and inclusive, particularly in light of the upcoming 2022 FIFA World Cup, policymakers can tap into Qatari citizens' sense of neighbourhood belonging in a manner that could cultivate a sense of civic engagement. For instance, Qatari property owners are encouraged to open up their spaces as a unique lodging option for the incoming World Cup visitors, providing them with an authentic local experience. Therefore, fostering a heightened sense of neighbourhood belonging can be a catalyst among citizens to step forward and represent the welcoming nature of their culture to the rest of the world.

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