

## SOCIAL NETWORKS AS A DETERMINANT OF THE SOCIALISATION OF HUMAN CAPITAL

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### Abstract

The paper addresses the issues relating to social capital and human capital. The primary objective of the paper is the general characteristics of social networks, in which the actors are Lithuanian students. At the same time, an assumption was made about their relationship with the socialisation of human capital. A theoretical part of the paper contains a literature review relating to the discussed issues. It provided the basis for the analysis of the results of the surveys conducted among first-year students of the Faculty of Politics and Management at the Mykolas Romeris University in Vilnius in October 2014. They determined the strength of social ties, network coverage, as well as network characteristics. The paper reaches a few key conclusions. They relate, in particular, to the occurrence of diverse social ties between the respondents and their closer and more distant environment and a lack of influence of this diversity on offering or receiving assistance. The survey results also showed the scale of diversity of social groups in which Lithuanian students socially meet, and social activity. The human capital of Lithuanian students was determined indirectly through their subjective assessments of personality traits.

**Key words:** social networks, social capital, human capital.

**Classification JEL:** D85 – Network Formation and Analysis: Theory; J24 – Human Capital.

### 1. Introduction

The socio-economic development of the modern world is increasingly determined by intellectual resources, among which the basic element is human capital. Its importance in this development is systematically growing due to its enormous growth potential. It should also be noted that in development processes it shows relationships with social capital, which complements growth determinants in its latest models. The development of the social capital theory can be regarded as a reaction to the collapse of the classical *welfare state* model and the criticism of the neoclassical paradigm in the economy and its inability to grasp the non-market, social phenomena affecting economic development (*Wygnański, Herbst et al., 2010, p. 7*). The issues of links between both types of capital, human and social, are presented in various approaches, in a number of papers (e.g. *Putnam, 1995; Helliwell & Putnam, 1999; Glaeser et al., 2002; Parts, 2003; Scheffler et al., 2010; Weaver & Habibov, 2012; Han et al., 2014*). However, it rarely relates to social networks involving students and the potential of these networks for the socialisation of individual human capital.

Therefore, the subject of the surveys contained in this paper is social networks, and the primary objective of the surveys is the general characteristics of social networks of Lithuanian students. The basic survey assumption is the statement that the more developed social networks become, the greater the opportunities for the socialisation of human capital. The paper assumes that the concept of the socialisation of human capital should be understood as the possibility of using the elements of human capital possessed by individuals (skills, qualifications, knowledge, information) by groups of people (various types of organisations or communities), and the spread of the positive external effects of the capital within groups, organisations and communities.

The objective of the paper was achieved through the use of the results of the surveys conducted among students of the Faculty of Politics and Management at the Mykolas Romeris University in Vilnius. The paper took into account the selected questions relating to the three

aspects of social capital: the strength of social ties, network coverage, and network characteristics. The analysis of the survey results was preceded by literature studies on human and social capital and the role of social networks in socialising individual human capital.

## 2. Human capital and social capital – a literature review

Theoretical considerations and the results of the surveys conducted show that both the wealth of individuals and the level of development of regions and countries depends on the resources (in quantitative and qualitative terms) possessed by these individuals, regions or countries. Nowadays, there is a widespread belief that apart from physical and financial capital, human and social capital is important, if not the most important, in this respect.

The concept of human capital is defined differently from the point of view of different fields of science. Taking the approach of methodological individualism, traditionally most researchers define human capital as abilities, knowledge, competences and skills embedded in an individual (*Beach, 2009*), attaching greater importance to their quality, not quantity. Investment in human capital in the form of incurring expenditure on education and training (broadly understood education), as well as health care, can generate greater effects than investment in physical capital (*Woodhall, 2001*). Thus, investment in human capital is becoming a desirable form of investment on which expenditure may be incurred by individuals, organisations, as well as society as a whole. However, a direct result of this investment is the attributes of an individual. They essentially determine its individual competitiveness in the labour market and better results in the form of income generated by it (*Mookherjee & Ray, 2003; Czapiński, 2008*). Nonetheless, the benefits of investing in human capital should also be considered from a wider than individual point of view. Better educated individuals, with greater expertise which, in a broad sense, is identified with human capital, contribute to an increase in productivity of other resources. Human capital is almost regarded as a synonym of knowledge embedded in individuals (*Dae-Bong, 2009*). On the other hand, knowledge is defined as the intellectual capital of the enterprise (*see: Kaczmarek, 2005*). Thereby, they contribute to an increase in production in enterprises and the economy, also creating competitive advantages of the organisation and the economy (*Rodriguez & Loomis, 2007; Marimuthu, Arokiasamy & Ismail, 2008; Barro, 2001*). Therefore, the impact of human capital is largely categorised into three parts: individual, organisation, and society (*Dae-Bong, 2010*).

Human capital of a group, organisation or society comes from the human capital of their members, but it is not the mere sum of knowledge, skills and qualifications of their constituent individuals. Positive effects of human capital for groups, organisations and societies result from the fact that individuals do not exist in isolation. The value of the abilities, skills and competences of individuals depends on the social and institutional context within which they are embedded (*Schuller, 2000*). Education as an important part of acquiring knowledge and skills can take place in many ways, also in relations between the individual and other members of the group, organisation or society (*Sleezer et al., 2003*). These relations form the networks of social relationships involving individuals, and these networks are a structural element of social capital. This means that social capital can play a significant role in the socialisation of individual human capital, because social capital is “... what combines various forms of human capital” (*Krebs, 2008*). (The concept of the socialisation of human capital can be understood as the opposite of its exclusivity, namely the possibility of preventing others from this capital.) Social capital has the ability to find, use and combine the skills, knowledge and experience of others, inside and outside groups, organisations and communities, strengthens the collective learning process and is a key element in the creation, diffusion and transformation of knowledge (*Kotarski, 2013, p. 8*).

Therefore, it can be concluded that the synergy effect of individual resources of human capital is provided by social capital. Social capital also supplements the deficiencies of other capital (financial, material) and facilitates the generation of all types of resources (Kotarski, 2013, p. 35). Its importance increases when the availability of other types of capital decreases, because it enables it to be used more effectively (Kazimierzak, 2007, p. 64).

In economic terms, social capital was presented by various authors. Only its three classical approaches are presented in more detail below. According to P. Bourdieu, social capital should be regarded as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition- or in other words, to membership in a group- which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001, p. 105). According to Bourdieu, social capital is, therefore, the aggregate of resources resulting from the involvement of the individual in the network. It depends on the size of the network and the quantity and quality of various forms of capital owned by each of its participants with which the individual is connected. Therefore, it is an individual’s good, which can be used and properly shaped (intentionally building social relationships) by the individual to benefit in the future. A good summary of Bourdieu’s approach can be found in: (Ruz, 2011).

However, more often social capital is considered to be a common good, and such an approach is presented by Coleman and Putnam. According to J. Coleman, social capital should be defined by its function as a set consisting of such components as trust, norms and human relationships, improving the efficiency of people and facilitating the creation of a social community (Coleman, 1990, p. 302). According to this author, social capital exists only in relations between people facilitating their joint activities and contributes to lowering their costs. It is not “a single entity, but a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within that structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence” (Coleman, 1998). From the point of view of the aim of the paper, it should be emphasised that in Coleman’s concept, social capital is an essential part of the development process, not only because like physical or human capital facilitates productivity. Its importance also stems from the fact that it shapes the human capital of not only the present but also the next generation (Rymsza, 2007, p. 25).

In Coleman’s concept, social capital serves joint action. Individuals can use it, but it does not limit the possibility of using it by other network actors. The source of benefits of an individual is its strong links with other members of social structures involving the individual. In this way, social capital is used by all the participants of the structure, as well as others through positive externalities, because decisions of each individual have consequences for all (Coleman, 2006, p. 151).

A collective aspect of social capital is also emphasised by R. Putnam, indicating that this capital “consists of such qualities of a society life in the society as networks, norms and trust- these qualities allow members of the society to increase the effectiveness of collective action and more efficient achievement of the shared objectives” (Putnam, 1995, p. 56). This approach to social capital can be used in its empirical studies (Van Oorschot et al., 2006; Milaszewicz, 2015). According to this author, “the core idea of social capital is that social networks have a value (...) social contacts affect the productivity of individuals and groups (...), social capital refers to connections among individuals- social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (Putnam, 1995, p. 18-19). According to Putnam, cooperation is a factor conducive to solving collective action dilemmas, can facilitate joint action. Although individuals form acquaintances that benefit their own

interests, but social capital is also externalities that affect the wider community. Because of these effects, social capital makes that even poorly connected individuals can benefit from the mere fact of living in a well-linked society (*Putnam, 2008*). In the analysis of social capital it is very important, according to Putnam, to distinguish between its two types: bridging capital and bonding capital. Bridging capital is available to everyone and joins groups and individuals who have not known one another before, having different socio-demographic characteristics and from different environments, contributing to their cooperation. According to Putnam “bridging capital is able to expand the boundaries of individuality (identity) and reciprocity,” (*Putnam, 1995, p. 22*). In contrast, binding capital connects individuals who already know themselves and put their personal trust in themselves, and joins them in closed groups, which may exclude other individuals from them. In addition to these two forms of social capital, linking capital is also distinguished which refers to relationships between groups which can differ from one another in a function, size, nature as well as position in the social hierarchy (*see: Gittell & Vidal, 1998; Onyx & Bullen, 2000*).

The building of social capital that facilitates access to other resources should be done by the creation of links and relations (networks) supporting cooperation between social actors.

### **3. Social networks – a structural element of social capital**

The common denominator of the concepts of social capital described above is the recognition of social networks as an important element of this type of capital. Social networks are social structures made up of individuals or organisations (constituting nodes), which are connected together in a characteristic way (*Wasserman & Faust, 1994*). Information is exchanged between nodes through direct contacts or indirectly through communication technologies (*Nowak & Praszkie, 2012*). A social network is a permanent pattern of relations between network members (*Wasserman & Faust, 1994*). A network member is an actor. Actors can be individuals, positions, associated or communities or any other social object, which can be combined with another object (*Turner & Maryanski, 2003*). Actors (points in a network) are interconnected. Connections (relations) between actors are created when the flow of resources occurs between them, which may be either unilateral or bilateral (reciprocal), or when some kind of contact between actors occurs (*Wysieńska, 2012*). Points in a network (actors) can be individuals having a human capital resource, and owing to connections (relations) between them the socialisation of human capital of these individuals takes place.

Wasserman and Faust (*1994*) list a number of examples of resource flows or contact: expressing sympathy, antipathy, respect or lack of it (judging others); business transactions, lending or borrowing things (transfer of material resources); participation in meetings of an organisation or association, membership of a club (affiliation); talking together, sending messages (behavioural interaction); migration or promotion (horizontal or vertical mobility), family relationship (kinship); business relationship (formal relations), (*Turner & Maryanski 2003*).

The quantitative analysis of the network determines its density, proximity and distance. Density is the number of existing connections, divided by the number of potential connections (*Nowak & Praszkie, 2012*). Network proximity determines the average distance of the node from all other nodes. This applies to a single node, namely a distance of one member from the others. In contrast, the sum of the proximity values of all nodes divided by the number of nodes determines a network distance. The number of possible ties depends on the number of actors in the network, so small networks will be characterised by a smaller number of possible relations, while large networks- bigger, but the determination of the real and possible number of connections for each point provides information about the material characteristics of the network (*Wysieńska, 2012*).

In the analysis of social networks it is also important to determine the degree of centrality of the individual positions in the network. Centrality can be determined in several ways; by determining the number of points that are connected to the actor; by the number of points between which the actor is located, or by the proximity of the position to other positions within the network (Turner & Maryanski, 2003). Due to the level of centrality, the following positions in a network of relations can be distinguished (Figure 1): a single point (understood according to the previously provided definition), a hub which is a point in a network having many contacts with other points, a superhub which is a few nodes having contacts with a very large number of single points and hubs (Wysieńska, 2012).

Regardless of the method of determining the degree of centrality of the position, it is important to identify points in the network, which, through their connections with other points play a special role of so-called gatekeepers. Gatekeepers are actors who, through connections, control access to the resources of other positions in the network. They are not the owners of the resource, but because of their connections may facilitate reaching it by other points in the network. Such a position of gatekeepers is occupied, for example, by representatives of organisations and associations helping others to enter the network structures (Wysieńska, 2012).

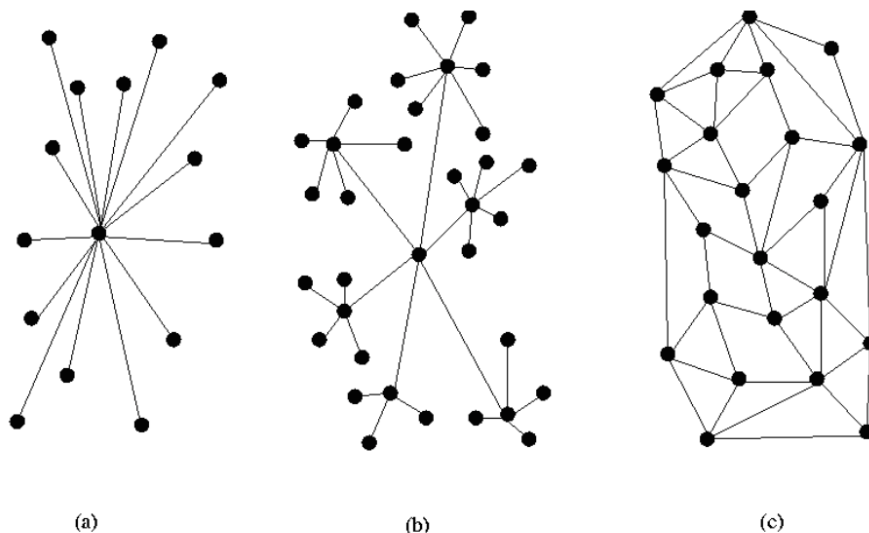


Figure 1. Centralised (a), decentralised (b) and distributed (c) networks (Wysieńska, 2012, p. 5)

In the analysis of social networks the basic information is human relations that are part of social capital. It is defined as an aspect of a social structure creating values and facilitating activities of actors within this structure (Coleman, 1990). Therefore, social capital is created when interpersonal structures change in a way that facilitates instrumental activities (Jasiński, 2005). There are different divisions of interpersonal relations, of which two should be mentioned (Putnam, 2008, p. 39). The first one assumes the existence of such ties as intensive and repeatable; episodic; single-stranded and anonymous; formally organised; informal; relating to public affairs; relating to entertainment (Sierocińska, 2011, pp. 73–74). The second division includes inclusive and exclusive ties. Inclusive ties are inward-looking, they enable the strengthening of homogeneous groups. Inclusive ties are the most similar to family ties. Among the members of these groups, values and ideas important for small social circles are developed that close themselves off from competing visions of cultural governance. Inclusive ties form so-called inclusive social capital (Szacki, 2010). On the other hand, exclusive ties are outward-looking, they enable the use of external assets and

disseminated information. Thus, they form exclusive social capital. Exclusive ties are created in heterogeneous groups, connecting people from different institutionalised structures, such as friends, neighbours (*Sierocińska, 2011, p. 75*). The existence of such ties determines the openness of individuals to the creation of relationships between them, despite differences in their values and norms. In contrast to inclusive ties, these are emotionally weak ties.

The concept of social capital in the social network theory can be found in the theories of weak ties, structural holes, social resources. The theory of weak ties (*Granovetter, 1973*) focuses on the strength of social ties used by an individual (actor) in the work process, understood as the creation of new values. Ties in a weak network are devoid of emotional intensity and are only restricted to a narrow kind of relationship. Still, weak ties can be a bridge between closely related groups, thus providing information and resources. Individuals reach other groups and obtain capital favourable from the point of view of an individual in the organisation. Weak ties are often conducive to new contacts and enable penetration into other groups (*Jasiński, 2005*).

According to the structural holes theory, the essence of the relationship between other groups in a social network is emphasised, and not the characteristics of a single group (*Burt, 1992*). Holes intensify the action of social capital. The significance of an individual in a group increases when it has contacts in the group, but at the same time increases when an actor has contacts with members of other groups who do not have contacts with members of the individual's group. Therefore, the position an individual increases that is important for members of other groups (*Burt, 1992*).

The social resources theory focuses on the nature of the resources embedded in the network (*Lin, 1999*). Lin emphasises that the factor transferring the benefit is not the weakness of ties, but a greater likelihood that ties can reach an individual with such a type of resources that is needed by another individual to achieve specific goals.

To sum up, the weak ties theory is focused on the nature of ties, the structural holes theory emphasises relationships between other groups, and the social resources theory focuses on the characteristics of other people who contact between one another. Therefore, the first two theories determine the network structure, while the essence of the third one is the network content. The network theories presented are not mutually exclusive, can mutually coexist, because they focus on different aspects of the social capital accumulation process (*Jasiński, 2005*).

The quality of social networks is also affected by the human capital of network-connected individuals. According to the definition of M. Gableta (*2000, p. 5, in: Król & Ludwiczynski, 2006, p. 117*), human capital is inextricably linked to physical, mental, intellectual and moral characteristics of particular individuals in the network. If a given social group is made up of poor and poorly educated people (namely with low human capital), even a dense network of connections between its members is not able to change their position (*Kotarski, 2013*). It should also be noted that the condition of high quality and value of human capital is the ability to use it effectively. The lack of practical application of knowledge and skills possessed by an individual and passive attitudes and the lack of commitment to social issues reduce the quality of human capital (*Michalczuk & Musiol, 2008*).

The study of social networks made up of individuals seems to be important from the point of view of Lithuania and other post-socialist countries undergoing economic and social changes (*Esping-Andersen, 1998; Sztompka, 2004*). According to Kääriäinen and Lehtonen (*2006*), in 2002 in post-socialist countries a dominant network pattern was networks made up of family members and the closest friends. This is, for example, reflected in the studies of social capital in Poland. These studies show that the belonging and trust of individuals to the immediate environment is highly developed. On the other hand, there are no high rates of social and local participation (*Zakrzewska, 2013*). However, in the Nordic countries –

Denmark, Norway and Finland - and liberal countries (*Esping-Andersen, 1996*) – such as Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and the United States – social networks were to a greater extent made up of people outside the family, of acquaintances (as opposed to friends), (*Growiec, 2012*).

#### 4. Research Methodology

The survey was conducted by the employees of the Department of Macroeconomics of the Faculty of Economics and Management at the University of Szczecin, within statutory research funded by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, entitled Knowledge and social capital. Part I. Bridging type of social capital (survey number: 503-2000-230-342). 113 students of the Faculty of Politics and Management at the Mykolas Romeris University in Vilnius were surveyed. The students taking part in this survey constituted 51.4% of all first-year students studying at this faculty. The survey was conducted on 15–23 October 2014, during academic training abroad of the employees of the Department of Macroeconomics. In the survey the technique of a paper questionnaire consisting of two parts: respondent's particulars and questions about social capital was used. In respondent's particulars respondents were requested to provide information on age, sex, marital status, family, place of origin and residence, occupational situation and income. The questionnaire part was prepared according to the logical scheme proposed by the World Bank. The questionnaire consisted of 36 closed and open questions and included in its scope social capital without any division into types. For the purposes of this paper, 11 questions were selected for the analysis.

#### Results

In the surveys conducted, a series of primary data on the issue of social capital was obtained. The paper focuses, in particular, on the issues related to the functioning of social networks. The survey results relate to three aspects of social capital: the strength of social ties, network coverage, as well as network characteristics. The paper focuses on their qualitative analysis without using Social Network Analysis (SNA) tools. The surveys were preceded by the analysis of the character and personality traits of the surveyed students, determining their social abilities (Table 1). Such traits as absent-mindedness, entrepreneurship, decision-making skills, prudence, assertiveness and a sense of happiness were taken into account. The analysis assumed that positive values marked on a five-point response scale (from -2 to 2) determine the positive character and personality traits of the respondents.

Table 1: Characteristics of the respondents (own study)

Scale	Very well organized	Entrepreneurial	Fast decision maker	Prudent	Assertive	Very happy
2	9.9%	10.8%	34.5%	19.8%	26.1%	34.2%
1	48.6%	48.6%	30.0%	32.4%	27.9%	44.1%
0	21.6%	29.7%	23.6%	20.7%	28.8%	17.1%
-1	14.4%	8.1%	10.0%	18.9%	10.8%	2.7%
-2	5.4%	2.7%	1.8%	8.1%	6.3%	1.8%

The analysis of the data showed that most people taking part in the survey describe themselves as happy people (78.4%) and fast decision makers (64.5%). It should be noted that a significant percentage of them are well organised (58.6%) and entrepreneurial (59.5%). Slightly more than half of them, in their own opinion, are characterised by prudence (52.3%) and assertiveness (54.1%). These results show that most respondents positively assess their

character and personality traits. Based on the definition of human capital of M. Gableta (2000, p. 5, in: Król & Ludwiczynski, 2006, p. 117), it can therefore be concluded that the students have a relatively high level of human capital and elements of social capital.

In the area of the social network analysis, first the survey results relating to the strength of social ties will be presented. Figure 2 presents data on the relationships of the respondents with family members.

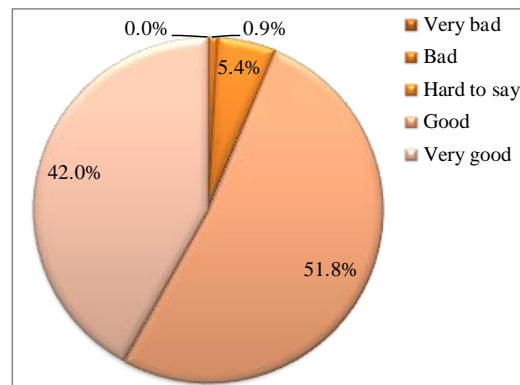


Figure 2. Relationships of the respondents with family members (own study)

The data presented in Figure 2 indicates good (51.8%) and very good (42.0%) relationships between the respondents and their family members. It is worth noting that no one described them as very bad, and less than 1% of the respondents described them as bad. On this basis, it can be concluded that there are very strong ties between the respondents and their families. Ties in this case are inclusive, which may indicate the homogeneity of these networks.

The characteristics of the strength of the respondents' ties with a closer (parents, siblings, friends, life partners) and more distant (colleagues and neighbours) environment were determined on the basis of the survey results shown in Figure 3. It includes only the responses showing attachment or a lack of attachment of the respondents to the selected people.

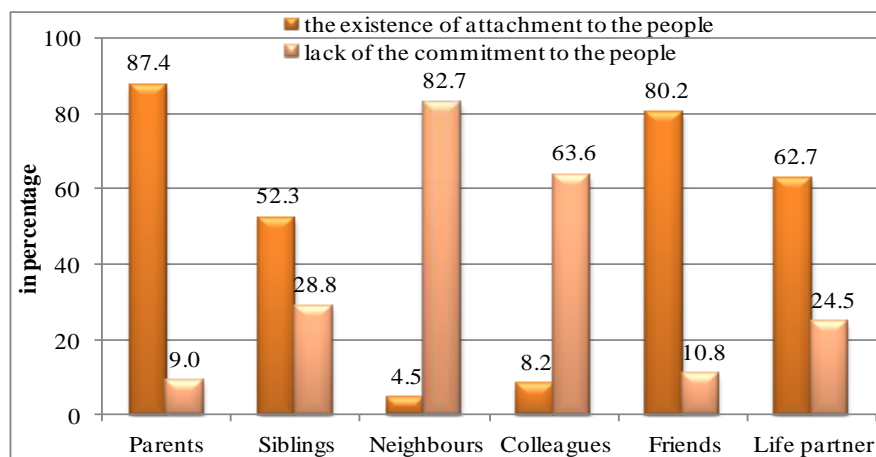


Figure 3. Attitude of the students towards the selected persons (own study)

The survey results clearly show the existence of a very strong attachment of the respondents to their family members. It is worth noting that it is much stronger in relation to parents (87.4%) than to siblings (52.3%). In addition, nearly 1/3 of the respondents indicate



a lack of attachment to siblings, and only 9.0% to parents. This may indicate different strength of ties between the actors involved in the same network. The survey results also show a strong attachment to friends (80.2%). However, it was lesser than to parents, but stronger than to siblings. When analysing the survey results, it is also worth noting that the attachment of the respondents to life partners is lesser than to parents. However, this is undoubtedly due to the fact that in the surveyed population only 2 persons (1.8% of the respondents) were married, and a vast majority were singles (90.3%). 8.0% of the respondents remained in informal relationships. This may indicate that the surveyed group of students, appreciates much more having a friend, than living in a formal relationship.

The data presented in Figure 3 also shows a very low degree of attachment to a more distant environment. Attachment to neighbours was declared by only 4.5% of the respondents, and to colleagues 8.2%, whereas its absence by 82.7% and 63.6%, respectively.

Next, the survey results relating to network coverage will be presented. Answers to four survey questions were used to determine network coverage. Figure 4 shows the data which enables the determination of network coverage.

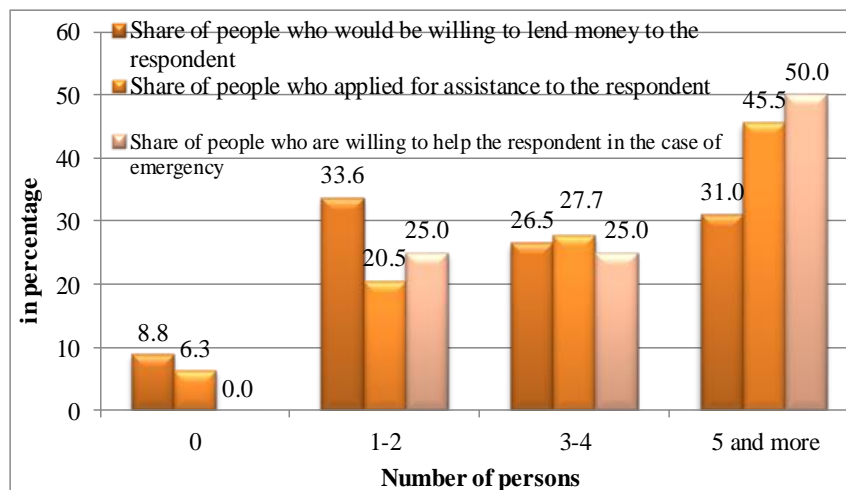


Figure 4. Number of persons from whom the respondents obtain assistance and to whom they provide assistance (own study)

Analysing the survey results in relation to the possibility of obtaining financial assistance from people outside the household, it can be concluded that the respondents can count on such support. Only 8.8% of the respondents indicated that they have no one to borrow money from. 1/3 of the students can count on assistance from 1 or 2 people. A smaller group (26.5%) was those who can count on support from 3 to 4 people. The possibility of obtaining assistance from 5 and more people was declared by 31.0% of the students. Although this question indicates the network coverage in which the students function, it must, however, be borne in mind that obtaining assistance is associated not only with trust in people, but also financial possibilities to provide it. Nevertheless, the financial aspect of these possibilities was not surveyed.

The survey results showed that in a random event all the surveyed respondents can count on assistance. Every fourth declared that he/she can obtain support from 1 or 2 people, the same number of respondents indicated 3 or 4 people. Half of the respondents can count on assistance from 5 or more people.

The surveys conducted also showed that other people also request assistance from the respondents. As many as 45.5% of the respondents indicated that at least 5 people requested such assistance from them, 3–4 people requested assistance from 27.7%, and 1–2 people-

from 20.5%. Only 6.3% of the students declared that no one requested assistance from them over the last year.

The network coverage, in which Lithuanian students operate, can also be demonstrated by their activity in non-governmental organisations (Figure 5). At this point it was assumed that the activity of the respondents in organisations, including non-governmental organisations, is a form of building networks of interpersonal connections. This can demonstrate the role of the respondents as gatekeepers who can help others to come into the structures of the network.

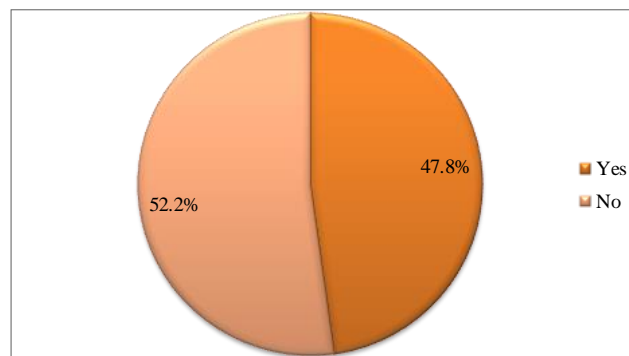


Figure 5. Percentage of the respondents ever acting in a non-governmental organisation (own study)

The data presented in Figure 5 shows that slightly more than half of the respondents have never worked in a non-governmental organisation. 47.8% of the respondents took part in such an activity, showing pro-social behaviours that form exclusive ties being the basis for building bridging social capital.

The next part of the analysis refers to the characteristics of social networks involving the respondents. Figure 6 shows the answers provided to the question of how many times during the last week the respondents socially met outside the university.

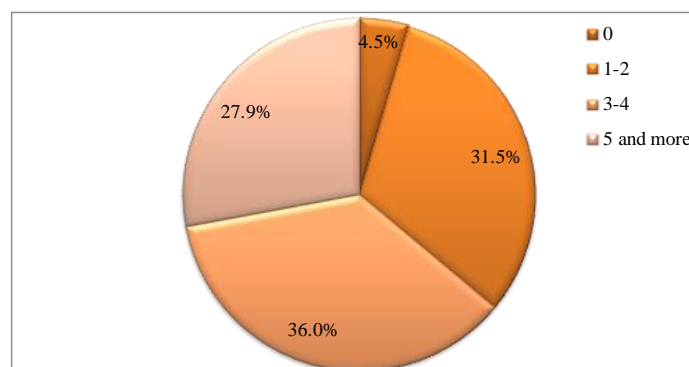


Figure 6. Number of social gatherings held by the respondents outside the university during the last week (own study)

Lithuanian students are very willing to socialise. Only 4.5% did not take part in any social gathering outside the university in the specified period; 31.5% met with friends 1 or 2 times, 36% of the respondents 3-4 times attended at such a gathering, and 27.9% at least 5 times. The survey results showed that for the respondents social gatherings outside the university are an important element shaping social networks and play an important role in their lives. Therefore, they can constitute the potential for the creation of other networks.

Figure 7 shows the characteristics of the people with whom Lithuanian students socially meet.

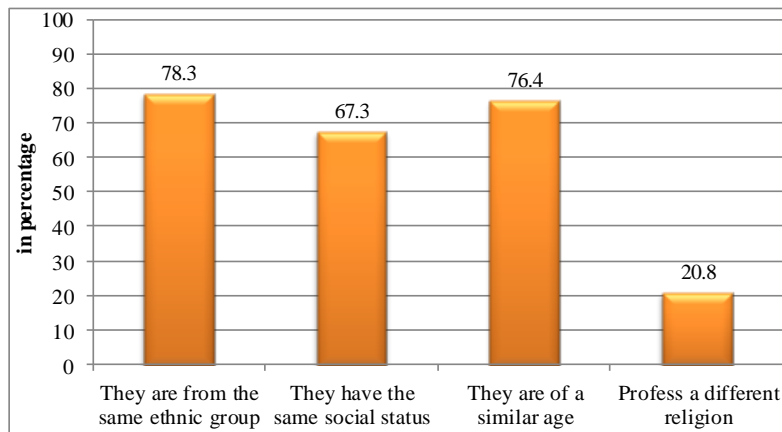


Figure 7. Characteristics of the people with whom the respondents socially meet (own study)

The survey results show that Lithuanian students mainly meet with people from the same national group (78.3%), who are of similar age (76.4%) and of similar social status (67.3%). This may demonstrate that the students are actors of homogeneous networks. This may be confirmed by the fact that only one in five of the respondents meets with people professing a different religion. On the other hand, this may be due to a religious structure in Lithuania, where Christianity is the dominant religion (*Lietuvos Statistikos Departamentas, 2013, p. 9*).

The last element of the characteristics of social networks involving the respondents is their sense of security in the immediate environment (Figure 8).

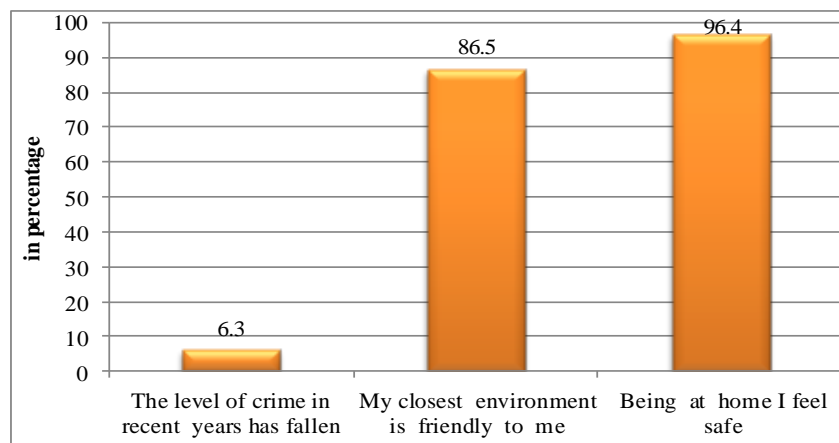


Figure 8. The sense of security of the respondents in the immediate environment (own study)

The Lithuanian students consider their immediate environment friendly and safe. Most of them (86.5%) believe that their immediate environment is friendly to them. In addition, as many as 96.4% feel safe when they stay at their homes. However, it should be noted that only 6.3% of the respondents indicated that the crime rate has decreased in the last years. This may mean that the immediate environment is considered safe, though a very small number of the respondents perceive a decrease in the crime rate.

## 7. Conclusion

In empirical studies the percentage of young people studying in higher education institutions is regarded as a consequence of social capital, but also as a measure of human capital. However, the effects of this education will not be visible until they enter the labour market. The analysis of the networks involving the present students, is nevertheless important from the point of view of the possibility of the socialisation of a human capital resource and the use of its potential.

The survey results show that there is a diversity of social networks among Lithuanian students. With respect to the immediate environment, namely family and friends, these ties are very strong, but significantly weaker in relations with a more distant environment. This confirms the survey results (*Esping-Andersen, 1998; Sztompka, 2004*) and the conclusion drawn from them that in the post-socialist countries family networks are stronger than informal networks. Despite the fact that so many years have passed, the conclusions from both surveys are thus concurrent. However, despite the lack of attachment to a more distant environment, the respondents indicate the possibility of obtaining assistance from outside the immediate network. This relates to both financial assistance and other types of aid. The respondents are also seen as people from whom assistance can be requested. The surveyed students are willing to socially meet outside the university, but the vast majority of these gatherings are held in a group of people of a similar social profile. Subjective self-assessments by the surveyed students demonstrate that they possess certain elements of human capital, which, through social networks can be further developed and diffused. Therefore, the respondents can be treated as potential gatekeepers in social networks. It was found that there may surely be barriers in the socialisation of human capital through the social networks in which Lithuanian students function.

The conclusions from the analysis carried out may give rise to the formulation of hypotheses which should be verified in further in-depth studies.

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