RESEARCH ARTICLE

Explaining civic engagement: The role of neighborhood ties, place attachment, and civic responsibility

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Abstract

This study examines whether neighborhood ties (comprising neighborhood trust and neighborhood friendship), place attachment, and civic responsibility influence a person's decision to engage in neighborly civic activities. Three personality traits were added to the model as potential moderators: egoism, altruism, and fear of negative evaluation. Using data from a survey of German citizens ($n = 610$), the structural equation model adopted revealed that place attachment and civic responsibility (partially) mediate the effect of neighborhood trust (neighborhood friendship) on local civic engagement intention. Furthermore, egoism negatively moderates the relationship between civic responsibility and engagement intention.

KEYWORDS
civic engagement, civic responsibility, neighborhood friendship, neighborhood trust, place attachment

1 | INTRODUCTION

Recent societal changes represent severe challenges for neighborhood communities, particularly in urban areas. These challenges include intra-national migration from rural to urban areas, which has increased the densification of living spaces within inner cities (Riera Perez et al., 2018). Additionally, long-standing traditional motivational factors,

such as living close to family, have increasingly disappeared due to the ongoing transformation toward an individualized, anonymous, and mobile society (Jardim & Marques da Silva, 2018; Rasborg, 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic that began in early 2020 has exacerbated these worldwide societal challenges. Whether from social isolation, psychological stress, the inability to buy groceries due to quarantining, or financial bottlenecks resulting from job loss, almost everyone has been affected by the crisis, especially elderly people in need of help from those in their immediate vicinity (Ramkissoon, 2020).

Neighborhoods constitute multifunctional systems of interaction and normative orientation and contrast with the trend toward an anonymous society. Well-developed neighborhoods are characterized by individuals, through civic engagement, building social networks on the basis of collective values, trust, and strong relationships; thus, civic engagement constitutes one potential antidote to increasing urban densification and the loss of social structures (Lanero et al., 2017; Levine et al., 2018). Moreover, civic engagement has been defined as the voluntary local activities of citizens conducted to benefit the community and improve conditions for others (Dekker & Halman, 2003). These individual and collective actions range from individual voluntarism or organizational involvement to political participation (Lannegrand-Willems et al., 2018). Noting the benefits that derive from local civic engagement, economists as well as governmental and nongovernmental organizations have devoted increasing attention to understanding and supporting such engagement to establish healthy and well-developed neighborhoods (Fu, 2019; Wickes et al., 2019).

These discussions, however, must also consider the exercise of power and privilege through oppressive forces. Power and privilege in the context of place—in this case, a neighborhood—are often associated with race and social class (Parker & Aggleton, 2003). For example, existing research shows that prejudicial attitudes toward other races lead to the segregation of minor groups and the ghettoization of certain neighborhoods (Keene & Padilla, 2014). Because gender, race, power, privilege, and class play a significant role, especially in today's world, they must be understood at the community level (Morehouse, 2008). Therefore, this paper includes and discusses these issues. Nevertheless, they are not part of the proposed research model.

This paper aims to contribute to extant research on prosocial behavior by investigating local civic engagement intentions at the neighborhood level. Building on key concepts from psychological research, we model neighborhood ties (comprising neighborhood trust and neighborhood friendship), place attachment, and civic responsibility as explanatory factors relevant to local civic engagement (Fu, 2019; Lenzi et al., 2012, 2013; Lewicka, 2005; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Furthermore, following several recommendations, we explicitly consider psychological constructs to explain civic engagement, namely by using personality traits (egoism, altruism, and fear of negative evaluation) as moderators (Fu, 2019; McComb, 2007).

2 | THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 | Local civic engagement

Civic engagement has attracted substantial attention in ongoing public and scientific debates in recent years (e.g., Evers, 2019; Shin, 2019). On the one hand, globalization, decentralization processes, and austerity measures following the 2008 global recession have been claimed to limit the capacity of states to provide social services. Thus, government agencies in Western countries have decreased their participation in public service delivery, shifting activities to citizens to save costs (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012; Kleider, 2018). On the other hand, the ongoing COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the importance of neighborhood solidarity, even when governments are supporting citizens in every possible way. For example, neighbors have provided elderly people and those in domestic quarantine with groceries and other forms of assistance. Civic engagement has been shown to positively impact the physical and psychological well-being of both those who receive help and those who offer it (Ramkissoon, 2020).

Local civic engagement at the neighborhood level has been defined as activities that address common issues and reinforce neighborhood solidarity (Fu, 2019). Resident activities often aim to positively influence the neighborhood's social situation or visual appearance, improving the community and society overall (Hays, 2015). Both civic organizations and urban development efforts require understanding how to motivate citizens and create strong social networks within neighborhoods. Accordingly, several scholars have focused on citizens' motivations to engage voluntarily in their communities (e.g., Lanero et al., 2017; Rehberg, 2005; Yeung, 2004). Meanwhile, others have focused on enhancing civic engagement among specific groups, such as adolescents (e.g., Lenzi et al., 2014; Rossi et al., 2016), or on studying the outcomes for and impacts on society (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2016). Previous research has also emphasized various factors that influence an individual's participation in civic engagement activities, particularly demographic and socioeconomic variables (e.g., Dubowitz et al., 2020; Fu, 2019).

Ethnicity and social class are often considered in this context. However, studies on ethnicity and civic engagement have drawn different conclusions. Kim and Ball-Rokeach (2006), for example, find no significant effect of ethnic heterogeneity on the scope of civic engagement. Other studies show that ethnic minorities are less engaged than the majority group (e.g., Torney-Purta et al., 2007), while still others dispute this assertion, noting that ethnic minorities are not less engaged but rather more likely to be engaged only within their own (ethnic) communities (Stepick et al., 2008). Lower civic engagement may also be partially explained by individuals' socioeconomic status. According to Foster-Bey (2008), lower socioeconomic status, which often characterizes migrants, leads to lower civic participation. Several authors agree that higher income inequality or ethnic diversity among individuals in a community leads to lower trust and, in turn, less civic engagement (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2000; Janmaat, 2012; Uslaner & Brown, 2005).

Regarding gender, studies disagree. While Wilson (2012) reveals that women are more likely to be engaged in their communities, Musick and Wilson (2008) find no significant differences between men and women. In Germany, Simonson et al. (2017) note that women are less engaged than men, although this depends on the type of civic engagement. In the area of childcare, for example, more women are involved than men, but in many other areas (e.g., providing instrumental assistance to people in the neighborhood), men dominate (Vogel et al., 2017). Although many studies focus on motives prompting civic engagement (e.g., Jardim & Marques da Silva, 2018; Lanero et al., 2017), the extant literature is characterized by a lack of understanding regarding which psychological processes and settings support positive attitudes toward engagement and foster intentions to engage in voluntary neighborhood-based civic activities (Lenzi et al., 2013).

2.2 | Neighborhood trust and neighborhood friendship

A place, or neighborhood, has been described as a social entity or membership group that provides identity (Fu, 2019; Hays, 2015). Social identity theory explains why many types of prosocial behaviors are directed toward members of the group to which an individual belongs and with which they identify (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Tajfel, 1981). Acting beneficially toward single members of the group or toward the group as a whole can be considered rational and self-interested behavior because an individual's sense of self is grounded in his or her membership and identification with the group (Lannegrand-Willems et al., 2018). Current research suggests that social groups more strongly influence individual members when the geographically-based social group is smaller in size in terms of population and physical area (Forsyth et al., 2015).

However, discrimination and segregation of ethnic minorities in the housing market is a major policy issue in Germany as well as in other developed countries (Dill et al., 2015). Negative attitudes toward ethnic minorities, such as immigrants, lead to discrimination in the housing market, which leaves these groups segregated into certain areas of the city. Dill et al. (2015) demonstrate that this residential segregation reduces neighborhood satisfaction due to economic and social isolation. This isolation further hinders efforts to integrate into the neighborhood and society

and thus causes attitudes toward immigrants to deteriorate even further. While Kim and Ball-Rokeach (2006) find no significant relationship between ethnic heterogeneity and neighborhood sense of belonging, several other studies observe that individuals who live in more ethnically diverse neighborhoods have lower levels of trust toward their peers (e.g., Alesina & La Ferrara, 2002; Gundelach & Traunmüller 2014; Janmaat, 2012; Koopmans & Schaeffer, 2016; Putnam, 2007). This trust encompasses neighborhood trust, out-group trust, and in-group trust (Putnam, 2007). Individuals in neighborhoods with higher racial or ethnic heterogeneity report not only lower trust but also lower connectedness and neighborhood satisfaction. This result holds across several countries, including Germany, and applies to both the minority and majority groups (Koopmans & Schaeffer, 2016). However, some studies reveal that ethnically diverse neighborhoods can also have a positive impact on trust. Diversity provides increased opportunities to interact with other groups, and increased contact, in turn, reduces prejudice and fear (e.g., Pettigrew et al., 2010; Schlueter & Wagner 2008). Schmid et al. (2014) reported no overall effect of actual diversity on trust for either the majority group or the minority group, noting that the negative and positive effects may cancel one another out. This aligns with Stolle et al. (2008) findings, which reveal that social ties positively mediate the effect of diversity on trust and thus neutralize its negative effects.

Empirical evidence for the influence of neighborhood ties (e.g., social cohesion, social capital, informal social control, community connectedness) on civic engagement links higher levels of connectedness to the neighborhood with stronger civic engagement (Albanesi et al., 2007; Flanagan et al., 2007; Fu, 2019; Lenzi et al., 2012, 2013; Shin, 2019).

This paper considers neighborhood ties to comprise two constructs: neighborhood trust and neighborhood friendship. Sabel (1993) defines trust as the confidence a party has in another party (i.e., the sense that neither party will exploit the other). Therefore, trust is a fundamental component of interpersonal relationships and collaboration (Misztal, 2013). Past research (e.g., Chung & Probert, 2011; Lanero et al., 2017) demonstrates that a higher degree of trust in others increases citizens' willingness to contribute to the common good. In this context, social trust acts as a key facilitator of coordination and cooperation, promoting a more pronounced community orientation and active civic involvement (Crystal & DeBell, 2002; Lanero et al., 2017). Based on these research findings, we propose the following hypothesis:

Neighborhood trust has a positive direct effect on local civic engagement intention.

The term "neighborhood friendship" describes personal relationships with neighbors, both in terms of the quantity and quality of these relationships within the local community and the degree to which people know and interact with their neighbors (Lenzi et al., 2013). The presence of close friends in the neighborhood increases social interactions and mutual support (Lenzi et al., 2012, 2014). Various scholars have associated a localized sense of community with a greater willingness to engage in voluntary civic activities, such as pro-environmental behaviors (Buta et al., 2014; Forsyth et al., 2015). Narrowly defined geographic units, such as neighborhoods, serve as sources of both community identification and commitment, fostering intentions to contribute to the common good. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Neighborhood friendship has a positive direct effect on local civic engagement intention.

2.3 | Place attachment

Various disciplines, including environmental psychology, human geography, and sociology, have studied the concept of place attachment (Anguelovski, 2013; Stefaniak et al., 2017). Place attachment concerns the emotional bonds and feelings that individuals develop toward a particular place over time (Brown & Perkins, 1992). Neighborhood attachment constitutes a specific localized form of place attachment that promotes a sense of security, strengthens personal ties, cultures and experiences, and maintains group identity (Hays, 2015).

Recent research has demonstrated a clear relationship between place attachment and willingness to engage in community development (Azizul et al., 2016; Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Jorgensen (2010) argues that the

development of social networks and social trust are important sources of commitment to a place and that this commitment, in turn, motivates civic engagement. Several studies have confirmed this assumption, demonstrating that citizens with strong ties to the local community (peer relationships and relationships to neighbors) tend to develop stronger emotional bonds to their neighborhoods, which affect civic activities, including donations of time, effort, and resources (Lewicka, 2005; Payton et al., 2005; Stefaniak et al., 2017). Thus, place attachment is assumed to mediate the relationship between neighborhood ties and civic engagement intention. Based on these findings, we propose the following hypothesis:

Place attachment mediates the positive effects of neighborhood friendship and neighborhood trust on local civic engagement intention.

2.4 | Civic responsibility

We define civic responsibility as an individual's sense of obligation and personal responsibility to contribute to his or her community (Komives et al., 1998). Inherent in this definition is an emphasis on acting beneficially toward one's community (Lanero et al., 2017), a product of people having a common interest in the places where they interact and fulfill their daily needs (Jurs, 2015).

Various studies, however, report a negative impact of a community's ethnic heterogeneity on social capital (Iyer et al., 2005), collective efficacy (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006; Koopmans & Schaeffer, 2016), and connectedness (Koopmans & Schaeffer, 2016), as members of an ethnically heterogeneous community build fewer social relationships and networks (Rotolo, 2000). The negative relationship between ethnic heterogeneity and collective efficacy suggests that residents of an ethnically diverse neighborhood struggle to mobilize resources and collaboratively solve neighborhood problems (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006).

According to Lenzi et al. (2013), local civic responsibility represents a precursor to civic behavior; in other words, the more people believe that they are responsible for contributing to the common good, the more likely they are to actively participate in civic actions. Their findings also indicate that the more people believe neighbors in their local community trust and care for one another, the higher the perceived level of civic responsibility. However, trust is not the only apparent factor determining the development of a sense of responsibility. Having a strong social network featuring deep relationships and good friendships within a neighborhood also stimulates a willingness to collaboratively address common issues. In turn, this willingness to collaborate is positively correlated with higher levels of civic engagement (Flanagan et al., 2007; Lenzi et al., 2012, 2013). This leads to the following hypothesis:

Civic responsibility mediates the positive effect of neighborhood friendship and neighborhood trust on local civic engagement intention.

At the neighborhood level, Anguelovski (2013) further observes that deeply rooted attachment is strongly associated with residents' sense of responsibility for improving their place and with their willingness to contribute to their community's well-being. This finding corroborates those of environmental and community psychology studies (Da Silva et al. 2004; Lewicka, 2005; Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Scannell & Gifford, 2010), which have demonstrated that place attachment predicts civic responsibility, civic participation, and pro-environmental behaviors. Therefore, we assume place attachment will significantly and positively affect civic responsibility and offer the following hypothesis:

Place attachment has a positive and direct effect on civic responsibility.

2.5 | Moderating variables

Following the recommendations of various authors who have suggested the need to explicitly consider psychological constructs, such as personality traits, when explaining civic engagement (Fu, 2019; McComb, 2007), this

study utilizes egoism, altruism, and fear of negative evaluation as possible moderators, based on their assumed relationship to civic engagement.

2.5.1 | Egoism as a moderating variable

Social exchange theory, which is based on behavioral economics, states that individuals are rational beings who seek to maximize their own benefits and minimize the costs of their behavior (Emerson, 1976). According to this perspective, individuals engage in prosocial behavior only for egoistic reasons or because they seek benefits in return (e.g., reputation or the obligation of reciprocity; Jardim & Marques da Silva, 2018; Wasko & Faraj, 2005). As discussed above, civic responsibility is a predictor of civic engagement intention. However, egoism—that is, engaging in volunteering activities for purely selfish reasons—is assumed to weaken the positive impact of civic responsibility on civic engagement intention because individuals will perform some behaviors only when they anticipate a personal gain. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Egoism negatively moderates the effect of civic responsibility on local civic engagement intention.

2.5.2 | Altruism as a moderating variable

Altruistic behavior has been generally described as selfless behavior that serves the welfare of others and thus advances a community's social solidarity (Paraskevaidis & Andriotis, 2017). A sense of empathy is among the most important drivers of altruistic behavior (Oliner, 1991). Thus, altruism may be viewed as a socialized appreciation of and sense of connection to others (Carrera et al., 2018).

Several studies examine the relationships of race, social class, and gender with altruism. However, their findings are mixed. While Tutić and Liebe (2020), Van Doesum et al. (2017), and Korndörfer et al. (2015), for example, conclude that social class has a positive influence on altruistic giving, Piff et al. (2010) and Chen et al. (2013) identify a negative effect, which means that individuals from lower social classes are more inclined to support others in an altruistic way. A literature review by Piff and Robinson (2017) likewise concludes that individuals from lower social classes are more interested in the concerns of others, are less self-oriented, and, therefore, exhibit higher levels of prosocial behaviors, such as helping or sharing with one another. Furthermore, Hale (2016) reports a negative relationship between racial bias and altruism. In other words, individuals who hold prejudicial attitudes toward people of other racial groups show lower levels of altruism. When men and women are compared, women appear more altruistic and exhibit lower prejudicial attitudes.

Social relations within a neighborhood and strong neighborhood attachment critically drive voluntary civic engagement, highlighting the important role of localism (Wilson & Son, 2018). According to Alessandrini (2007), altruism and a desire to benefit the community ensure that individuals continue to engage regularly in their neighborhoods. Thus, building on the expectation that place attachment increases local civic engagement intention, we propose the following hypothesis:

Altruism positively moderates the effect of place attachment on local civic engagement intention.

2.5.3 | Fear of negative evaluation as a moderating variable

The construct "fear of negative evaluation" comprises an individual's concern about being the subject of others' evaluations, the expectation that these evaluations will be negative, and despair regarding these

negative appraisals. Individuals who fear others' negative judgments may be more likely to behave in ways that allow them to avoid such situations (Leary, 1983). Several studies have associated the fear of negative evaluation with increased shyness (Kiran, 2016), increased perceived stress (Shafique et al., 2017), and decreased self-esteem (Atmaca & Ozen, 2019). Accordingly, individuals with a strong fear of others' negative evaluations may be more likely to perceive engagement activities that involve peer interactions as intimidating, prompting them to avoid participating in such activities (McComb, 2007; Tanaka & Ikegami, 2015). As discussed previously, we expect civic responsibility to positively affect local civic engagement intention. However, we also assume that the fear of negative evaluation by others mitigates this effect, leading us to propose to the following hypothesis:

Fear of negative evaluation negatively moderates the effect of civic responsibility on local civic engagement intention.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model for local civic engagement intention.

3 | METHODS

3.1 | Study design

To test the delineated model, we employed empirical data derived from a cross-sectional online survey of German residents. Inclusion criteria for the survey were (1) age (older than 21 years) and (2) length of residence (more than 2 years living in the neighborhood). We limited participants to those who had maintained their residence for more than 2 years because research suggests that place attachment and local civic engagement intention require time to evolve (Hay, 1998; Stedman, 2006).

Qualtrics, an online research company, provided access to an online panel. Qualtrics is one of the leading market research companies offering data collection products for academic research purposes. The company has a
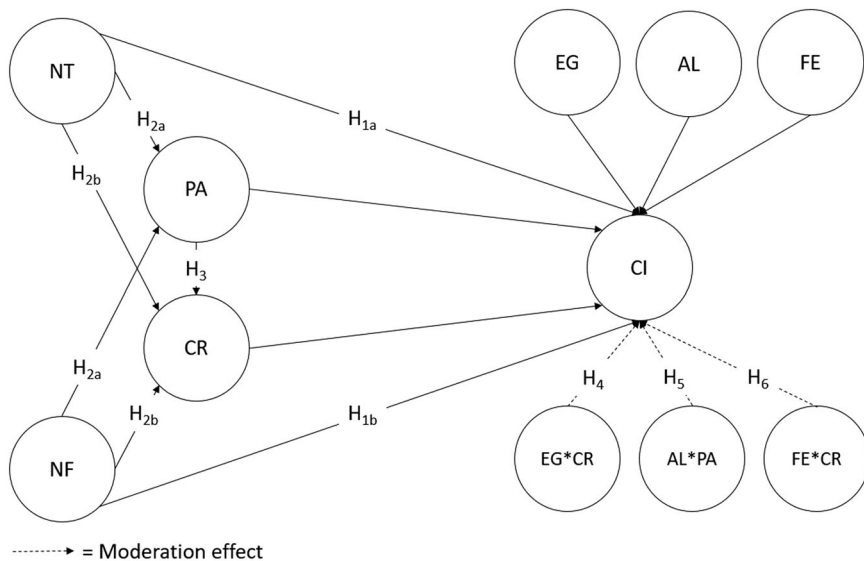

FIGURE 1 Conceptual model for local civic engagement intention. AL, altruism; CI, civic engagement intention; CR, civic responsibility; EG, egoism; FE, fear of negative evaluation; NF, neighborhood friendship; NT, neighborhood trust; PA, place attachment

large online panel of respondents who are compensated monetarily for participating in the surveys. Data were collected in November 2018, resulting in a sample of 610 participants.

3.2 | Measurement

We measured all of the model components presented in Figure 1 using a reflective measurement scale. All survey items were measured on a five-point Likert scale. The place attachment scale was based on Buta et al., (2014) conceptualization. Based on the work of Valencia-Garcia et al. (2012) and Jokela (2009), we employed a direct measurement approach that included three items to measure neighborhood trust. Neighborhood friendship was measured with four items using scales developed by Cicognani et al. (2008) and Obst et al. (2002). The civic responsibility scale was adapted from the work of Doolittle and Faul (2013) while the egoism and altruism scales were adapted from the approach of Reizer and Mikulincer (2007). We relied on Leary's (1983) scale to measure the fear of negative evaluation. "Strongly disagree" and "strongly agree" were considered the scales' anchors for all items. Appendix A provides the exact wording of each item.

We controlled for several sociodemographic covariates: age, gender, type of housing, tenure status, duration of residence in the current neighborhood, city population size, and civic engagement in the previous 12 months. Age, duration of residence in the current neighborhood, and city size were measured on an ordinal scale; all other covariates were operationalized as nominal-scale variables featuring two or three categories.

We included the above sociodemographic variables for the following reasons. Pavlova et al. (2015), for example, report lower community embeddedness among younger individuals, which can be explained by the higher mobility of young people who, at that age, often only temporarily inhabit a neighborhood and thus exhibit a lower intention to participate in civic activities. Intention to engage within the neighborhood also increases with age because individuals perceive greater opportunities and possess increased competencies with which to do so (Jugert et al., 2013).

Regarding gender, we expect, based on the homophily principle, that men will exhibit a significantly lower level of civic responsibility than will women. The homophily principle describes a person's tendency to interact more frequently with people who are like them. Because women tend to build relationships with other women more quickly, they are likely to develop an increasing sense of obligation to collectively address neighborhood issues (Laniado et al., 2016).

Other studies on civic engagement also consider homeownership as an important structural characteristic in explaining civic engagement (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006; Rotolo et al., 2010). Tenure status (rental or ownership) can serve as a proxy for social class (Rotolo et al., 2010). Property owners are generally more connected to their neighborhoods and are, therefore, more likely to mobilize resources to support their neighborhoods (Rohe & Stewart, 1996; Rotolo et al., 2010). Moreover, owners have more social relationship within their neighborhoods than do tenants (Rohe et al. 2018).

Compared to people who live in single-family houses or classical apartments, moreover, those who live in collaborative forms of housing may feel an increased obligation toward their neighborhoods. This is because residents in collaborative housing are motivated by the desire to live as a community that actively contributes to its own creation and sustainability (Fernández Arrigoitia & Scanlon, 2015).

Duration of residence plays a role in the sense that living longer in the same neighborhood results in a higher intention to voluntarily participate in civic activities (Rohe & Stewart, 1996; Rotolo et al., 2010). A longer duration of residence has been reported to facilitate the development of strong neighborhood ties (Fu, 2019; Liu & Xu, 2017).

Living in a smaller rather than a larger city may also lead to a higher civic engagement intention. This expectation can be explained by the greater anonymity within larger cities where people often do not know their neighbors and, therefore, might not be aware of neighborhood issues, including local problems or opportunities for engagement. In addition, residents of larger cities tend to live in apartments rather than single-family or

terraced houses, which may further enhance anonymity and lead to less networking and fewer social interactions between neighbors. Residents of large cities, therefore, may feel less connected to their neighborhoods (Lewicka, 2005).

Finally, previous studies (e.g., Chung & Probert, 2011; Shani et al., 2020) indicate that an individual's experiences of previous civic activities are a significant determinant of the intention to engage in such activities in the future. That is why we inquired regarding respondents' civic engagement in the previous 12 months.

3.3 | Analysis

We used partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) and SmartPLS 3.0 software (Ringle et al., 2015) to estimate our model and conduct mediation and moderation analyses. We controlled for several sociodemographic covariates, and we analyzed the moderating variables—egoism, altruism, and fear of negative evaluation—as interactions within the main model. We applied a mean-replacement approach for missing values (<1%) and a conservative no-sign-changes bootstrapping procedure based on 5000 bootstrap iterations.

4 | RESULTS

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics, including reliability and validity statistics. The Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted values exceed the respective recommended thresholds of 0.7, 0.7, and 0.5 (Hair et al., 2017). Furthermore, the Fornell-Larcker ratio indicates the measurement's discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 2 reports the model's parameter estimates and SEs (in parentheses). The R^2 of civic engagement intention is 0.547. Based on the effect sizes (f^2), however, the strength of each predictor variable in explaining civic engagement intention is either zero or small. Nevertheless, neighborhood friendship has a medium effect on civic responsibility ($f^2 = 0.121$) and a strong effect on place attachment ($f^2 = 0.715$).

TABLE 1 Descriptive statistics and reliability and validity statistics

	Descriptive statistics		Reliability and validity statistics			Discriminant validity: Fornell-Larcker criterion							
	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE	NT	NF	PA	CR	RE	AL	FE	CI
NT	3.45	1.09	0.886	0.929	0.815	0.903							
NF	2.82	1.20	0.938	0.955	0.843	0.739	0.918						
PA	2.83	1.15	0.934	0.953	0.835	0.703	0.829	0.914					
CR	3.20	1.02	0.879	0.917	0.734	0.677	0.768	0.737	0.857				
EG	2.13	0.88	0.790	0.815	0.535	0.156	0.242	0.214	0.182	0.731			
AL	3.90	0.94	0.924	0.946	0.814	0.430	0.444	0.412	0.545	0.162	0.902		
FE	2.53	1.17	0.913	0.887	0.666	0.059	0.119	0.082	0.122	0.266	0.185	0.816	
CI	3.32	1.13	0.897	0.936	0.830	0.558	0.657	0.631	0.647	0.178	0.532	0.085	0.911

Abbreviations: AL, altruism; AVE, average variance extracted; CI, civic engagement intention; CR, civic responsibility; EG, egoism; FE, fear of negative evaluation; NF, neighborhood friendship; NT, neighborhood trust; PA, place attachment.

TABLE 2 Path coefficients and effect sizes

| | Path coefficients (SD) | t statistics | p values | Bias-corrected 95% bootstrap interval | | f^2 |
				2.5%	97.5%	
CR → CI	0.179 (0.053)	3.396	0.001	0.076	0.286	0.023
NF → CI	0.247 (0.067)	3.704	0.000	0.114	0.373	0.030
NF → CR	0.407 (0.051)	8.000	0.000	0.306	0.507	0.121
NF → PA	0.682 (0.034)	20.212	0.000	0.615	0.748	0.715
NT → CI	0.018 (0.053)	0.342	0.732	−0.082	0.129	0.000
NT → CR	0.188 (0.043)	4.370	0.000	0.106	0.273	0.042
NT → PA	0.199 (0.036)	5.465	0.000	0.126	0.270	0.061
PA → CI	0.182 (0.054)	3.348	0.001	0.075	0.288	0.020
PA → CR	0.267 (0.049)	5.472	0.000	0.169	0.361	0.058
AL*PA → CI	0.011 (0.032)	0.337	0.736	−0.052	0.074	0.000
AL → CI	0.216 (0.043)	5.045	0.000	0.133	0.303	0.056
EG*CR → CI	−0.097 (0.033)	2.894	0.004	−0.160	−0.030	0.021
EG → CI	0.028 (0.034)	0.812	0.417	−0.036	0.099	0.001
FE*CR → CI	−0.029 (0.036)	0.819	0.413	−0.094	0.048	0.002
FE → CI	-0.033 (0.033)	1.009	0.313	-0.093	0.038	0.002

Note: The table does not report the effects of the sociodemographic covariates.

Abbreviations: AL, altruism; CI, civic engagement intention; CR, civic responsibility; EG, egoism; FE, fear of negative evaluation; NF, neighborhood friendship; NT, neighborhood trust; PA, place attachment.

TABLE 3 Specific indirect effects

| | Specific indirect effect (SD) | t statistics | p values | Bias-corrected 95% bootstrap intervals | |
				2.5%	97.5%
NF → CR → CI	0.073 (0.024)	3.046	0.002	0.029	0.124
NT → CR → CI	0.034 (0.013)	2.583	0.010	0.012	0.063
NF → PA → CR → CI	0.033 (0.011)	2.864	0.004	0.013	0.057
PA → CR → CI	0.048 (0.016)	2.929	0.003	0.019	0.082
NT → PA → CR → CI	0.010 (0.004)	2.676	0.007	0.004	0.018
NF → PA → CI	0.124 (0.038)	3.256	0.001	0.051	0.200
NT → PA → CI	0.036 (0.012)	2.904	0.004	0.013	0.063

Abbreviations: AL, altruism; CI, civic engagement intention; CR, civic responsibility; EG, egoism; FE, fear of negative evaluation; NF, neighborhood friendship; NT, neighborhood trust; PA, place attachment.

Table 3 shows the specific indirect effects resulting from the mediation analyses that were conducted to test hypotheses H_{2a} and H_{2b}.

Several control variables were included in the analysis to examine whether the results differed between sociodemographic groups. The table in Appendix B presents the variables that significantly affected the model components.

5 | DISCUSSION

Table 4 provides an overview of the hypotheses and their confirmation status.

Our findings do not support a direct link between **neighborhood trust** and **civic engagement intention** ($b = 0.018$, $p = 0.732$, $f^2 = 0.000$, **H$_{1a}$**). Instead, the results suggest that this relationship is fully mediated by place attachment and civic responsibility. We offer the following potential explanation: Neighborhood trust does not increase the intention to engage in neighborly activities because neighborhood trust encourages individuals to underestimate the need to personally engage in such activities. In other words, trusting people in the neighborhood may lead individuals to assign responsibility for neighborhood affairs to their neighbors (Lelieveldt, 2004).

However, the results indicate that **neighborhood friendship** has both a direct effect ($b = 0.247$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.030$, **H$_{1b}$**) and an indirect effect via place attachment and civic responsibility on **civic engagement intention** ($b = 0.033$, $p < 0.005$). This is consistent with previous findings indicating that a stronger social network and stronger connections to others in the neighborhood strengthen the sense of community (Forsyth et al., 2015). It also indicates that neighbors are central in social networks and that they can influence citizens' motivation to participate in voluntary civic activities (Marzana et al., 2012).

Consistent with our hypothesis (**H$_{2a}$**), our results reveal that **place attachment** mediates the effects of **neighborhood trust** ($b = 0.036$, $p < 0.005$) and **neighborhood friendship** ($b = 0.124$, $p < 0.005$) on **civic engagement intention**. The stronger the trust and social relationships in a neighborhood, the stronger the sense of neighborhood connectedness. Therefore, place attachment illustrates an individual's emotional bond to the neighborhood, which is itself based on trust and social relationships (Lenzi et al., 2013; Lewicka, 2005). Furthermore, we observe that **civic responsibility** mediates the effects of **neighborhood trust** ($b = 0.034$, $p < 0.05$) and **neighborhood friendship** ($b = 0.073$, $p < 0.005$) on local **civic engagement intention (H$_{2b}$)**. This result is consistent with the norms and collective efficacy model (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Our findings support the claim that social relationships and civic discussions can increase citizens' awareness of societal problems and increase their motivation to work for collective goals within their neighborhoods (Lenzi et al., 2014; Marzana et al., 2012).

Also as hypothesized (**H$_3$**), we find that **place attachment** positively influences **civic responsibility** ($b = 0.0267$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.058$). This confirms the premises of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Tajfel, 1981), indicating that individuals who feel connected to their neighborhood as a community exhibit a greater willingness to engage in voluntary action (Forsyth et al., 2015; Lannegrand-Willems et al., 2018).

TABLE 4 Hypotheses and their confirmation status

Hypothesis	Path	Direction	Path weighting	p value	Outcome
H$_{1a}$	NT → CI	Positive	0.018	0.732	Not confirmed[a]
H$_{1b}$	NF → CI	Positive	0.247	0.000	Confirmed
H$_{2a}$	NT/NF → PA → CI	Positive	0.036/0.124	0.004/0.001	Confirmed
H$_{2b}$	NT/NF → CR → CI	Positive	0.034/0.073	0.010/0.002	Confirmed
H$_3$	PA → CR	Positive	0.267	0.000	Confirmed
H$_4$	EG*CR → CI	Negative	−0.097	0.004	Confirmed
H$_5$	AL*PA → CI	Positive	0.011	0.736	Not confirmed[a]
H$_6$	FE*CR → CI	Negative	−0.029	0.413	Not confirmed[a]

Abbreviations: AL, altruism; CI, civic engagement intention; CR, civic responsibility; EG, egoism; FE, fear of negative evaluation; NF, neighborhood friendship; NT, neighborhood trust; PA, place attachment.

[a]Rejected on grounds of statistical insignificance.

Finally, our analysis reveals that an **egoistic personality** negatively moderates the effect of **civic responsibility** on **civic engagement intention** ($b = -0.097$, $p < 0.005$, $f^2 = 0.021$, $\mathbf{H_4}$). People with more pronounced egoism may engage in voluntary activities but only if they can expect some reward—whether in the present or in the future. Our results suggest that possible rewards for voluntary engagement, including improvements in a volunteer's psychological well-being (Ramkissoon, 2020), may not be immediately apparent (Perugini et al., 2003).

Meanwhile, neither **altruism** ($b = 0.011$, $p = 0.739$, $f^2 = 0.000$, $\mathbf{H_5}$) nor **fear of negative evaluation** ($b = -0.029$, $p = 0.413$, $f^2 = 0.002$, $\mathbf{H_6}$) demonstrated a statistically significant moderation effect. However, altruism did have a direct positive effect on civic engagement intention; therefore, it can be considered a relevant explanatory factor for local civic engagement. This result, which supports the finding of Carrera et al. (2018), might be explained by the inclination of individuals with a high altruistic motivation to perceive the personal costs of voluntary civic engagement to be less than the positive social benefits to their community. The statistically insignificant moderation effect of the fear of negative evaluation suggests that civic engagement is not necessarily associated with intimidating situations. Although social interactions are usually unavoidable in local engagement activities, these interactions are often limited to smaller groups or bilateral communication. Thus, more intimidating situations that might cause individuals with a high fear of negative evaluation to feel uncomfortable tend not to arise. On the contrary, local civic engagement can satisfy citizens by enhancing their positive impact on the neighborhood and thereby improving their self-image, counteracting their shyness, and increasing self-esteem. Therefore, engaging in voluntary civic initiatives can contribute to an individual's self-confidence and well-being (Amnå, 2012; Measham & Barnett, 2008).

Generally, the study's findings indicate that psychological and social processes critically shape individuals' intentions to participate in civic engagement activities. Accordingly, programs to enhance social interactions among neighborhood residents may directly increase civic involvement. Such programs could include the establishment of community initiatives to reduce physical and social disorders or to support local sports organizations and physical activity groups for neighbors. Urban planning policies and related urban design initiatives could also help by creating additional public open spaces in residential areas. Previous research (Grillo et al., 2010; Hays, 2015) has demonstrated that opportunities for connection in the local community, whether through social events or local activities, increase neighborly familiarity, promoting the development of strong neighborhood ties and relationships.

Ultimately, city governments should devote additional attention and resources to providing public services that enhance residents' attachment to their neighborhoods. Such public services could take the form of programs that aim to increase the level of perceived civic responsibility in neighborhoods. More specifically, this could include events informing residents about the needs of neighborhood members or programs to train residents to assist their disabled neighbors.

Because our findings suggest that an egoistic personality moderates an individual's decision to engage in neighborly activities, policymakers should also incentivize citizen engagement in neighborly activities to increase the expected returns from prosocial behavior; for example, policymakers could offer a prize or reward to the neighborhood's most engaged residents. Policymakers should also highlight mutual support and strengthened social networks as benefits and outcomes of civic engagement activities.

6 | CONCLUSION

Scientific interest in civic engagement has grown rapidly in recent years (Evers, 2019). Using structural equation modeling, this study analyzed a conceptual framework that utilizes neighborhood ties (neighborhood trust and neighborhood friendship), place attachment, and civic responsibility to explain civic engagement intention. Additionally, the model included three personality traits—egoism, altruism, and fear of negative evaluation—as possible moderators.

The findings support the basic premises of social identity theory. Individuals with a stronger connection to a collective—in this case, a neighborhood—demonstrated a greater willingness to undertake voluntary actions

(Forsyth et al., 2015; Lannegrand-Willems et al., 2018). Understanding the mechanisms responsible for the association between neighborhood ties and civic engagement is critical for developing neighborhood programs based on empirical evidence (Fu, 2019). As a starting point, efforts to foster civic engagement must invest in empowering neighborhoods and communities to develop programs, including events or activities that increase the time neighbors spend together, that support the physical and emotional bonds among citizens.

However, the volunteer and engagement literatures often refer to class bias as a factor hindering the development of community-level affinities. According to studies, the middle class, which predominantly includes white people, volunteers more frequently than does the working class. In addition, regardless of socioeconomic status, white people volunteer more than do members of other races or ethnicities (Rotolo et al., 2010). The limited scope of civic engagement among ethnic minorities could be historical. In fact, throughout history, civic engagement by ethnic minorities was discouraged and even banned, and these groups were systematically marginalized because white people feared the elimination of their own privileges and power (Sánchez-Jankowski, 2002). Their exclusion from mainstream civic engagement led some minorities to focus their engagement primarily on their own groups and interests (Bobo & Johnson 2000). Meanwhile, other minorities responded to their subsequent inclusion and newfound enjoyment of historically white privileges with a sense of responsibility to give back to society and the opportunity to demonstrate loyalty to the nation (Sánchez-Jankowski, 2002).

While this study has important implications, it also entails some limitations. First, although the preceding discussion of social origin and race appears to play an important role within neighborhoods, this study did not take into account the migration background of the respondents. Further studies should, therefore, include ethnicity in the analysis to better illuminate social inequalities within neighborhoods. Second, while we only assessed individuals' intentions to engage in civic activities, the theory of planned behavior postulates that behavioral intentions constitute an important prerequisite of actual behavior (Ajzen, 1985). However, future research could test the suggested model with actual civic engagement as dependent variable. Third, the items used to measure intention lacked detailed information regarding specific forms of civic engagement. Thus, the respondents may have imagined different voluntary activities than those intended by these items. Fourth, because our sample featured only German residents, it is unclear whether our results can be generalized to other populations, countries, or cultures. Finally, our data were cross-sectional, which prohibits us from drawing conclusions concerning the direction of the effects or from making causal interpretations of the mediation relations. Longitudinal research is required to evaluate the degree to which different neighborhood features can affect subsequent civic engagement.

This study opens several avenues for future research. First, rather than collecting data solely on individuals' intentions to engage in neighborly activities, efforts to analyze actual behavioral data regarding citizen participation in voluntary neighborly activities would facilitate the advanced analysis of our conceptual model. Second, subsequent research could examine, in greater detail, the diverse types of civic engagement while also attempting to explain differences in engagement across these diverse activities. For instance, examining whether the factors that influence voting behavior also influence efforts to support neighbors in need or engagement in local political activism would provide useful insights. Research on civic engagement could, moreover, be expanded to consider membership in neighborhood associations and efforts to help elderly people. Third, future studies could extend our conceptual framework by considering other explanatory variables, such as complex emotional constructs (e.g., pity or empathy). Scholars could also integrate the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985) into the existing model to examine how civic engagement intentions relate to attitudes toward civic engagement, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Finally, future research could incorporate measures of power and privilege, culture, diversity, inclusion, or equity into the model to examine potential differences in the civic engagement intentions of individuals from different ethnic backgrounds and different social classes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that there are no conflict of interests.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Ann-Kathrin Seemann and Lisa Dang; *Methodology*: Ann-Kathrin Seemann and Jörg Lindenmeier; *Formal analysis*: Lisa Dang; *Writing (original draft preparation)*: Lisa Dang; *Writing (review and editing)*: Iris Saliterer and Jörg Lindenmeier; *Supervision*: Iris Saliterer; *Project administration*: Ann-Kathrin Seemann. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data used can be requested from the authors.

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PEER REVIEW

The peer review history for this article is available at https://publons.com/publon/10.1002/jcop.22751

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APPENDIX A

TABLE A1 Question items

Question items	Factor loadings	p values
Neighborhood Trust		
NT1: I trust the people in my neighborhood.	0.928	0.000
NT2: I feel safe in my neighborhood.	0.869	0.000
NT3: Even if the people in my neighborhood had the opportunity, they would not take advantage of me.	0.910	0.000
Neighborhood Friendship		
NF1: I love to spend time with the people who live in my neighborhood.	0.925	0.000
NF2: I think that I have much in common with the people who live in my neighborhood.	0.891	0.000
NF3: If I need company, I can turn to someone in the neighborhood.	0.915	0.000
NF4: The friendships and connections that I have with the people in my neighborhood mean a lot to me.	0.940	0.000
Place Attachment		
PA1: I identify strongly with my neighborhood.	0.0887	0.000
PA2: My neighborhood is part of me.	0.917	0.000
PA3: I feel attached to my neighborhood.	0.928	0.000
PA4: My neighborhood means a lot to me.	0.924	0.000
Civic Responsibility: I think that…		
CR1: …I can make a difference in my neighborhood.	0.862	0.000
CR2: …all citizens have a responsibility to their neighborhood.	0.819	0.000
CR3: …it is important to be informed about neighborhood issues.	0.872	0.000
CR4: …it is important to get involved in civic engagement activities.	0.872	0.000
Egoism		
EG1: I help others while expecting to get help from them in the future.	0.841	0.000
EG2: I help others because I expect a personal reward.	0.655	0.000
EG3: I like helping others because it gives me a sense of control.	0.872	0.000
EG4: I only help others if I get something useful from my actions.	0.492	0.011
Altruism		
AL1: When I have the opportunity, I like to help others who are in need.	0.902	0.000
AL2: I feel good about supporting others in need.	0.914	0.000
AL3: When other people involve me in their problems, I will have their back.	0.881	0.000
AL4: It gives me a lot to help others.	0.910	0.000

TABLE A1 (Continued)

Question items	Factor loadings	p values
Fear of Negative Evaluation		
FE1: I worry about what other people think of me, even though I know that it makes no difference.	0.987	0.003
FE2: When I talk to someone, I worry about what they might think of me.	0.731	0.004
FE3: I think a lot about the impression I make on others.	0.780	0.001
FE4: I am worried I might say or do something wrong.	0.739	0.002
Civic Engagement Intention: That I will engage in neighborhood civic activities in the future is...		
CI1: ...very unlikely (1)–very likely (5).	0.935	0.000
CI2: ...very uncertain (1)–very certain (5).	0.914	0.000
CI3: ...absolutely precluded (1)–not precluded at all (5).	0.884	0.000

APPENDIX B

TABLE B1 Significant effects of the control variables on the model components

	Path	p values	Bias-Corrected 95% Bootstrap Intervals		f^2
			2.5%	97.5%	
6–10 years duration of residence → CI	0.061	0.049	0.000	0.049	0.007
10,000–20,000 residents → CI	0.068	0.039	0.002	0.039	0.007
21–29 years → CI	−0.118	0.004	−0.198	0.004	0.013
21–29 years → PA	−0.090	0.008	−0.156	0.008	0.012
50,000–100,000 residents → PA	0.060	0.026	0.006	0.026	0.009
Cooperative form of housing → CR	0.063	0.074	−0.007	0.074	0.007
Male → CR	−0.061	0.015	−0.109	0.015	0.011
Civic engagement (last 12 months) → CI	0.150	0.000	0.087	0.000	0.035
Civic engagement (last 12 months) → PA	0.069	0.010	0.016	0.010	0.013
Civic engagement (last 12 months) → CR	0.123	0.000	0.068	0.000	0.033

Note: Complete results are available upon request.