

The Social Networks of Rural Community Leaders

- comparison study between more and less viable rural communities -

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농촌지역사회 지도자들의 사회적 네트워크

- 서비스 및 용역제공의 정도에 따른 지역사회간 비교 분석 -

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요 약

이 연구는 인구 4,000에서 6,000명 가량의 농촌 지역사회에서의 서비스 및 용역의 제공기능의 활성화 정도와 관련하여 지도자들의 특성을 파악하고자 한다. 지역사회 지도자들간의 공식적이고 수평적인 연계와 지도자들과 지역사회 외부 조직들간의 연계를 중심으로 분석이 이루어졌다. 성(性), 교육정도, 연령, 수입, 지역사회 출신 여부, 그리고 지역사회에서의 거주기간을 포함하는 농촌 지역사회 지도자들의 개인적 특성은 지역사회 서비스 및 용역의 제공기능과 관련이 없었다. 그러나, 농촌 사회의 서비스 및 용역의 제공기능 활성화 정도는 그 지역의 지도자들이 지역사회 외부의 사람들 및 조직들과 연계를 맺고 있는 정도와 관련이 있었다. 또한 이 연구에서는 농촌 지도자들의 공식적인 지역사회 개발 활동에 능동적으로 참여하는 능력이 지역사회 서비스 및 용역 제공기능의 활성화 정도와 정적으로 관련이 있음이 밝혀졌다.

I . Introduction

This study examines the relationship between the social networks of leaders and the viability of rural communities. Leader's extracommunity ties and their relationships to one another in the local area will impact on the viability of rural community (O'Brien, et al. 1991). Viability is not defined in terms of survival. Brown (1991) explained viability as follows:

A community is economically and socially viable if it fulfills economic service center functions adequately (p. 129).

O'Brien et al. (1991) stated that:

A viable service center would provide basic

"everyday services" in the areas of consumer goods, primary health care, and education (through the secondary level). In addition it would maintain a stable or growing population which would provide a steady source of consumers for local trade and services (p. 702).

The analysis examines social network characteristics of 60 leaders using data drawn from field interviews with 15 leaders in each of four Myuns in Kyung-KiDo.

II . Theoretical background

Israel and Beaulieu (1990, quoted in Swanson, 1996) noted that communities that appear best

able to act on matters of local concern are graced with leadership. Effective community leaders (Langone & Rohs, 1995) are individuals who move beyond holding routine offices in local activities and organizations into broader decision making, policy development, program implementation, and organizational renewal. Warren (1978) noted that within the context of community development, leaders perform many functions that either contribute directly to the accomplishment of a particular development objective or indirectly through the empowerment of local people. While many researchers emphasized leaders' individual characteristics for effective community development activities, O'Brien et al. (1991, 1996) and El-Ghannam (1995) emphasized the social networks of leaders for successful community development action. Leaders' characteristics can be associated with community viability. O'Brien and his associates (1991) stated that:

Community viability is associated with the extent to which their leaders have ties to persons and organizations outside of the community and to their ability to relate to one another within their respective communities (p. 711).

According to O'Brien and his colleagues, linkages and ties within and outside the community provide communities with social capital (O'Brien, et al., 1991; 1996). Coleman (1988) terms social capital:

Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors? whether persons or corporate actors? within the structure? Unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between

actors and among actors. It is not lodged either in the actors themselves or in physical implements of production. Because purposive organizations can be actors ("corporate actors") just as persons can, relations among corporate actors can constitute social capital for them as well (p. 98).

Leaders' characteristics and their social ties in rural communities are important in determining the success or failure of rural community development efforts (El-Ghannam, 1995). Relating to social capital in developing communities, O'Brien et al. (1996) reported the following:

Communities which have more "social capital" take advantageous positions vis-a-vis other rural communities, even though their material resource base may not be appreciably better than that found in other places within the same general economic and ecological niche (p. 11).

III. Research design

1. Selection of communities and leaders

Thirteen Myuns with population ranges from 4,000 to 6,000 were initially selected after removing Myuns surrounded by demographically larger regions such as Myuns, Eups, or cities in Kyung-Ki Do. However, three of the Myuns were removed from consideration because data for those communities were not available in order to complete the community viability ranking. Each Myun was ranked according to its viability score.

The criteria for the community viability rank were adapted from O'Brien and associates' study (1996) entitled "The Social Networks of Leaders in More and Less Viable Communities". Criterion data for viability ranking were as follows: (a) population stability that was

measured by percent population change of 1985? 1995; (b) the rate of increase of per capita taxes paid in 1985? 1995; (c) whether high schools exist or not; (d) retail business score (based on the number of 6 selected businesses: the number of bank, eating place, clothing, hotel/motel, drug store, and automobile dealership); (e) level of health care services available, as measured by the number of health services; health care center, personal hospital, dentist, and Oriental hospital.

The two top (more viable) communities and two bottom (less viable) communities were selected from the community viability ranking list. Two more viable communities were Bi-Bong Myun (population: 5,522) in Hwa-Sung Gun and

Chung-Un Myun (population: 4,195) in Yang-Pyung Gun. Two less viable communities were Sam-Jook Myun (population: 4,041) in Ahn-Sung Gun and Sang Myun (population: 5,640) in Ka-Pyung Gun.

A position-reputation method was employed to identify rural leaders from each selected community. O'Brien and his colleagues (O'Brien, et al., 1991, p. 704) stated that "extensive interviews on community issues, as well as historical analyses of patterns of leadership over time confirmed the positional/reputational selection of individuals as those who had a great deal of influence in the local community". The number of position-holders ranged from 83 in Sang Myun

Table 1. Viability Scores of Ten Selected Rural Communities in Kyung-Ki Do

Place	Name	Col ^a	Col ^b	Col ^c	Col ^d	Col ^e	Col ^f	Col ^g
Community-A	Bi-Bong	4	4	2	6	3	3.8	1
Community-B	Chung-Un	9	3	2	2	7	4.6	2
Community-D	Yang-Dong	8	6	2	1	7	4.8	3
Community-C	Ma-Do	6	1	7	10	1	5	4.5
Community-E	Yang-Kham	5	2	7	9	2	5	4.5
Community-G	Yang-Sung	3	5	7	4.5	7	5.3	6
Community-F	Toe-Chon	2	8	7	3	7	5.4	7
Community-H	Do-Chuck	1	10	7	4.5	7	5.9	8
Community-I	Sang	7	7	7	7.5	7	7.1	9
Community-J	Sam-Jook	10	9	7	7.5	7	8.1	10

^a Percent population changes from 1985-1995. Source: Statistical Year Book of Ahn-Sung, Kha-Pung, Kwang-Joo, Hwa-Sung, Yang-Pung Gun (1986, 1996).

^b Percent change in per capita taxes paid in 1985-1995. Source: Statistical Year Book of Ahn-Sung, Kha-Pyung, Kwang-Joo, Hwa-Sung, Yang-Pyung Gun (1986, 1996).

^c Whether high schools exist or not. Source: Statistical Year Book of Ahn-Sung, Kha-Pyung, Kwang-Joo, Hwa-Sung, Yang-Pyung Gun (1986, 1996).

^d Retail business score (based on 6 selected businesses). Source: Korean.

Telecommunication Company; Electronic Directory Service (1997) for each of ten places.

^e Medical service score (based on the number of health care centers, personal hospitals, dentists, and Oriental hospitals). Source: Korean Telecommunication Company; Electronic Directory Service (1997) for each of ten places.

^f Average rank of Col^a - Col^g.

^g Community viability scores.

to 143 in Sam-Jook Myun.

The two informants were selected from each five institutional sector in the community: business, local government, agriculture, education, and religion. Each informant was asked to select 15 leaders from the list of position-holders in their respective communities. The instructions were "Please go through the list of names and pick out persons who in your opinion are the most influential in your community". The informants were then asked to select the five most influential leaders and then the next five most influential from the pool of 15 leaders. The top five leaders were given a score of 3; the next five leaders were given a score of 2; and, the final five leaders were given a score of 1. The score awarded to the position-holders by the five informants in each community were summed and 15 persons with the highest scores were identified as community leaders which were surveyed in this study.

2. Operationalization of variables

Two sets of variables were used in the analysis. The first set of variables was an indicator of a leader's linkages to persons and organizations outside of the community. This question was addressed by computing mean scores of three of the survey questions. The first question was "Check the organizations for which you have attended county, provincial or national meetings". The number of organizations that they had attended was used to calculate the mean scores of an indicator of leaders' linkages. The second question was, "Check the organizations in which you have held offices at the county, provincial, or national level, and list the names of the organizations for which you have been on

committees at the county, provincial, or national level". The number of organizations in which they have held offices and/or been on committees was used to compute the mean scores of an indicator of community leaders' linkages. The third question was "List the names of persons to whom you would go for information or advice if you had to make some important decisions in your business or professional life or in some matter affecting the local community. Would you tell me who would be the five people you would most likely go to for information or advice on these matters. They may or may not live in this community". Only the number of persons whom the community leaders indicated from outside of the community was used to calculate the mean scores of an indicator of leaders' linkages to persons and organizations outside of communities.

The second set of variables measured formal horizontal linkages between leaders within their respective communities. This was addressed by computing mean scores on two of the survey questions. The first question was "Looking back at the list of names, would you tell me if you have worked with any of them on community projects?" The second question was "Have you been or are you presently on any community betterment, economic development, chamber of commerce, or industrial development boards or committees?" The mean scores of the above two items were calculated to answer this research question.

IV. Findings

Demographic characteristics of respondents group are presented in Table 2 according to the community viability rank. Twenty-nine community leaders from each community viability

category or 96.7% of the respondents were males. Only 2 of 60 total respondents were female. Each of the respondents was married. Only one (3.3%) leader from the more viable communities and 4 (13.3%) from the less viable communities reported less than 6 years of education. Twelve (40.0%) and 9 (30.0%) community leaders from the more viable communities and less viable communities, respectively, reported an education level from 7 to 9 years. The largest percentage of the leaders (46.7% of the leaders from the more viable communities and 43.3% of leaders from the less viable communities) reported 12 years of education. Only 3 (10.0%) in the more viable communities and 4 (13.3%) in the less viable communities had more than 14 years of education.

When classified by age, 3 (10.0%) community leaders in the more viable communities and 4 (13.3%) from the less viable communities were younger than 40 years old. Twelve respondents from the more viable communities and 9 from the less viable communities were 41 to 49 years old. Thirteen (43.3%) and 7 (23.3%) leaders from each viability category were 50 to 59 years old, and 6 (20.0%) and 8 (26.7%) were 60 to 69 years old, respectively. Three (10%) of the community leaders in the more viable communities were over 70 years old, and no leader from the less viable communities was over 70 years of age.

Respondents were asked to indicate how long they had lived in their communities, and no leader from the more viable communities and only 2 (6.7%) from the less viable communities reported that they had lived in their communities for less than 20 years. Six (20.0%) from the more viable communities and 9 (30.0%) from the less viable communities had lived there for 20 to 39 years. Twenty-four (80.0%) from the more and 19 (63.3%) leaders from the less viable communities

had lived there for more than 40 years. When asked where they were born, 26 (86.7%) leaders from the more viable communities and 24 (80.0%) from the less viable communities indicated that they were born in the communities where they currently lived.

Over 70% (22) of the leaders from the more viable communities and 60% (18) from the less viable communities were farmers, and 3 (10.0%) from the more viable community group and 2 (6.7%) from the less viable communities were presidents of agricultural cooperative associations in their communities. One leader (3.3%) from the more viable and 4 (13.3%) from the less viable communities were governmental officers, and 4 (13.3%) from the more viable and 6 (20.0%) from the less viable communities were owners of small businesses.

Relating to income, 2 (6.7%) leaders from the more viable communities and 5 (16.7%) from the less viable communities indicated that their annual incomes were less than 10,000,000 Won. Ten (33.3%) community leaders from the more viable communities and 8 (26.7%) from the less viable communities reported income levels between 10,000,000 and 29,999,999 Won. The income range of seven (23.3%) leaders from the more viable communities and 11 (36.7%) from the less viable communities was between 30,000,000 Won and 30,000,000 Won. Seven (23.3%) community leaders from the more viable communities and 3 (10.0%) from the less viable communities reported income levels between 50,000,000 and 99,999,999 Won. Only 4 (13.3%) leaders from the more viable communities and 3 (10.0%) from the less viable communities earned more than 100,000,000 Won per year. The minimum income of community leaders in both more and less viable communities was \$4,000. The maximum

income of leaders was \$ 160,000 from the more viable communities and \$ 80,000 from the less viable communities. The average incomes of leaders from the more viable communities and less viable communities were \$ 24,300 and \$ 17,300, respectively.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of the Community Leaders

Demographic characteristics	More viable Communities		Less viable Communities	
	n	%	n	%
Gender (Female)	1	3.3	1	3.3
Marital Status				
Married	30	100.0	30	100.0
Education				
6 years or less	1	3.3	4	13.3
9 years	12	40.0	9	30.0
12 years	14	46.7	13	43.3
14 years	0	0	3	10.0
16 years or more	3	10.0	1	3.3
Age				
Under 40	3	10.0	4	13.3
41~49	5	16.7	11	36.7
50~59	13	43.3	7	23.3
60~69	6	20.0	8	26.7
Over 70	3	10.0	0	0
Years lived in Community				
Under 20	0	0.0	2	6.7
20~39	6	20.0	9	30.0
Over 40	24	80.0	19	63.3
Born in Community				
Yes	26	86.7	24	80.0
No	4	13.3	6	20.0
Occupation				
Farmer	22	73.3	18	60.0
President of Agricultural Cooperative Association	3	10.0	2	6.7
Governmental Officer	1	3.3	4	13.3
Small Business	4	13.3	6	20.0
Income				
Under 10,000,000 Won	2	6.7	5	16.7
10,000,000~29,999,999	10	33.3	8	26.7
30,000,000~49,999,999	7	23.3	11	36.7
50,000,000~99,999,999	7	23.3	3	10.0
Over 100,000,000 Won	4	13.3	3	10.0

V. Leaders' linkages to persons and organizations outside of the community

The first null hypothesis was developed to determine if there was a significant difference between more viable communities and less viable communities in the mean scores of the indicator of community leaders linkages to persons and organizations outside of their local communities.

HO₁ was stated as follows:

There is no statistically significant difference in an indicator of linkages to persons and organizations outside of the community between rural leaders of more viable communities and rural leaders of less viable communities.

This hypothesis was tested at the .05 level of significance using a t-test. The t-test was utilized to test for differences in the mean scores of the indicator of rural community leaders' linkages to persons and organizations outside of the community.

The mean scores of the indicator of rural community leaders' linkages to persons and organizations outside of the community between two community viability groups were found to be significantly different (t-value = 2.51, p < .05). Therefore, the null hypothesis HO₁ was rejected. There was a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the indicator of rural community leaders' linkages to persons and organizations outside of the community between more viable communities and less viable communities. The mean score of the indicator of rural community leaders' linkages to persons and organizations outside of the community was significantly higher for community leaders from more viable communities than that of community leaders from less viable communities.

Table 3. T-test for the Scores of the Indicator of Rural Community Leaders' Linkages to Persons and Organizations Outside of the Community

Group	n	M	t	p
More viable communities	30	7.13	2.51	.015*
Less viable communities	30	4.37		

* Significant at the .05 level

VI. Formal horizontal linkages between and among leaders within their respective communities

The second null hypothesis was formulated to ascertain if there was a statistically significant difference in rural community leaders' formal horizontal linkages between and among leaders within their respective communities between more viable communities and less viable communities.

HO₂ was stated as follows:

There is no statistically significant difference in the formal horizontal linkages between rural leaders of more viable communities and rural leaders of less viable communities.

This hypothesis was tested using a t-test with an a priori alpha level of .05. The result of the t-test, presented in Table 4, revealed a statistically significant difference in rural community leaders' formal horizontal linkages between and among leaders within their respective communities between more viable communities and less viable communities. Consequently, the third null hypothesis was rejected. The mean score of the leaders' formal horizontal linkages between and among leaders within more viable communities was significantly higher than that of leaders within less viable communities.

Table 4. T-test for the Scores of Leader's Formal Horizontal Linkages Between and Among Leaders Within Their Respective Communities

Group	n	M	t	p
More viable communities	30	7.33	2.601	.004**
Less viable communities	30	3.73		

** Significant at the .01 level.

VII. Discussion

The findings of this study indicated that leaders in more and less viable communities did not differ appreciably in personal characteristics? such as age, gender, education, occupation, income, being born in the community, and years lived in the community.

However, the findings of this study revealed that leaders of more viable communities produced a higher mean score of vertical linkages to persons and organizations outside of the community than did leaders of less viable communities. This result corresponds to the results of O'Brien's study (1991, 1996) and suggests that to be effective agents of change, local leaders must be connected to resources and power bases outside the local community (Warren, 1978; O'Brien, et al. 1991; O'Brien & Hassinger, 1992; O'Brien, et al. 1996). Regardless of differences in cultural and political environments, the extent to which leaders have vertical linkages to persons and organizations outside of the community appears to be associated with community viability. O'Brien and his colleagues (1996) noted that:

Differences in the social networks of leaders were associated with different degrees of success by individual rural communities in coping with similar economic, ecological, and demographic

conditions. Rural communities with higher levels of social capital, as reflected in their leaders' having more cooperative social networks with other leaders, will continue to have an advantage over rural communities with less social capital in their leadership networks (pp. 2-3).

The result of the study also indicated that leaders of more viable communities produced a higher mean score of formal linkages between and among leaders than did leaders of less viable communities. O'Brien and his colleagues (1991) stated that types of leadership differ from one rural community to another and efforts of local leaders can make a difference in the response of rural communities in solving their problems. However, a dense network of social interactions between and among leaders can be an important factor for enhancing community viability regardless of differences in community types. O'Brien et al. (1996) found in the more viable communities:

Leaders in more "viable" communities were more likely than leaders in the less viable places to have worked with one another on community projects. Working on these projects created what Putnam (1993) calls a "dense network of social interactions", in which, over time, the leaders in the more viable places were more likely than leaders in the less viable places to have had experience in accomplishing collective community tasks with a great number of other persons (p. 2).

O'Brien and his colleagues (O'Brien, et al. 1991, 1996) emphasized that the way in which leaders relate to one another places the more viable communities in an advantageous position vis-a-vis other rural communities, even though their material resource base may not be appreciably better than that found in other places

within the same general economic and ecological niche.

Trends toward an urbanized society have depopulated many rural areas (Flora, et al., 1992). However, South Korean rural communities do not have enough natural resources nor enough money to invest in rural community economic development programs. Therefore, rural communities with higher levels of social capital? as reflected by their leaders having more vertical linkages in provincial and national networks and opportunities to work with other leaders on local projects? will continue to have an advantage over rural communities with less social capital. As O'Brien and his colleagues stated, the social capital advantages of the more viable communities cannot be duplicated in less viable communities overnight (O'Brien, et al., 1996). Therefore, the process of promoting community leaders to work together over a period of time may be more important than the accomplishment of any specific project or objective rural communities.

For more viable communities, leaders should be encouraged and provided opportunities to develop more linkages to persons and organizations outside of local community. To accomplish the above suggestion, the government should encourage and provide community leaders more opportunities to participate in provincial and national meetings related to community development in addition to developing programs to promote effective rural community leadership.

Leaders of more viable communities work with one another on local projects to a greater extent than do leaders of less viable communities. Therefore, providing more opportunities and encouraging community leaders to work with one another on local projects may contribute to

enhancing their community's viability. Research on the development of effective rural community leadership should devote more attentions to the behavioral processes of interpersonal network formation and development. A qualitative research study is recommended to accomplish this purpose rather than a quantitative study

VIII. References

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