

ABSTRACT

LOCAL LEADERS AND COMMUNITY ACTIVENESS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF FORTY THAI RURAL COMMUNITIES

The emphasis of the research is to study how local leaders influence the community activeness. Community activeness, the main dependent variable, is conceptualized as having two dimensions. The first one, "corporate action for public purpose" refers to such things as digging irrigation ditch, building reservoir, bridge and road construction. The second one refers to such thing as using new technique or machines in farming. The independent variables are the leader characteristics which include values, biological characteristics, socio-economic status, and performance. Values chosen to study are concern for economic development, conflict avoidance, popular participation, selflessness, national commitment, action propensity, change orientation, and equality. Other leaders characteristics studied as independent variables are age, size (combination of height and weight), education, exposure to modernity (measured by number of times the leaders travel to Bangkok in a year), and frequency of formal meetings.

Twenty tambons in central region of Thailand are chosen as the community samples. A tambon is a small administrative unit in which the local leaders are popularly elected. "Corporate action for public purpose" is measured by (1) the money value of public projects contributed by the local people of each tambon on the per capita basis (2) percentage of people in the tambon who are the members of cooperatives (3) percentage of eligible voters who went to the poll. "Innovative change" is measured by (1) percentage of the people in each tambon who have tractors (2) percentage of people in each tambon who have water pump. Factor analysis is utilized to prove that each three variables are in fact on the same dimension.

In measuring values, value scales are utilized. The leaders are interviewed by the prepared questionnaire. In interviewing 1,020 leaders from 40 tambons are used as samples. Twenty tambons are

from the central region. Ten tambons are from a province 200 kilometers south of Bangkok. The last ten tambons are from a province about 250 kilometers northeast of Bangkok. The reasons of adding twenty more tambons in measuring the leaders values are two folds. Firstly to compare values of leaders of different regions. Secondly the values found from the samples of three regions should be a better representative of the Thai leaders values. It is then can be used to compare with similar study in other countries. However, in studying the relationship between community activeness and leaders characteristics, only the data from the central region is analyzed.

Two methods of multivariate analysis are performed: multiple regression analysis and stepwise regression analysis. The findings are as followed. For "corporate action for public purpose", the three most important independent variables that influence the variation of this dependent variables are exposure to modernity (-), size of the leaders (+), and the value of conflict avoidance (+). These three variables account for 68% of the variance of "corporate action for public purpose". Two other variables significantly relate to "corporate action for public purpose" are selflessness of the leaders (-), and frequency of formal meetings (+). For "innovative change", the three most important independent variables that influence the variation of this dependent variables are education level of leaders (+), age of the leaders (-), and the value of national commitment (+). These three independent variables account for 62% of the variance of "innovative change". Other variables that significantly relate to "innovative change" are the value of action propensity (+), concern for economic development (+), honesty (+), and the wealth of community (+) which is measured by the per capita income of the people in each tambon.