

The Moderator Effect of Community Size on Suffering from Social Problems among Rural Youth in Egypt

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This study focuses on the level of suffering from social problems and tests the moderator role of community size in relation with suffering from social problems. Our study was conducted in Gharbia governorate, Egypt. Two contrasting villages were chosen as the highest and lowest on Human Development Index (HDI). A purposive sample of inhabitants in the age category 18-40 years was chosen. Sample persons were interviewed using a structured interview schedule. Measures of suffering from 13 common social problems were constructed. T-test and factor analysis were employed in data analysis. Results showed that community size had a clear moderator effect on suffering from eight social problems, but had trivial moderator effect on suffering from the other five social problems. The output of factor analysis yielded basically the same four factors; the order of those factors was different in the two villages. We recommend that rural development projects may have different priorities for rural communities of different size. [Abd-Ella, M., El-Lethee, H and Ebad-Allah, M. **The Moderator Effect of Community Size on Suffering from Social Problems among Rural Youth in Egypt. International Journal of Agricultural Science, Research and Technology in Extension and Education Systems, 2013; 3(1):19-25**]

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1. Introduction

There is a large body of literature that studies the youth social problems. Mainly, the youth social problems are a reflection of their lack of economic, family, health, educational, and cultural opportunities (Bazinh, 2007; Al-Bendari, 2000; Al-Dmhojy, 2006; Abd El-Aal, 1996; El-Damasy, 2008; El-Maddah, 2009; Hillel, 2009; Mohammed, 2000; Orabi, 2000).

Accordingly, social problems may either be primary or secondary. Primary problems are those arising as a consequence of the difficulties of rural youth. Secondary social problems are those resulting from the interplay between difficulties of rural youth and other surrounding conditions. Those secondary social problems are considered as causations (Melvin, 1937).

The surrounding conditions are reflected in some moderators between the social problems as consequences and social problems that act as causations. Community attachment, community satisfaction, population density, and population size are some examples (Buttel, Martinson and Wilkening 1979; Durkheim, 2007; Fischer, 1972; Fischer, 1973; Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974; Simmel, Frisby and Featherstone 1997). The current study will take

community size into account and analyses its effect as a moderator variable with respect to suffering from social problems.

Two separate traditions in sociology identify that the level of population density, along with high population size, in a human collectivities (communities and societies) has important social consequences. The first tradition is social structuralisms which saw high population density, along with high population size, as a precondition for the development of division of labor (Durkheim, 2007). The second traditions, social behaviorism concerned in the increased stimulation and interaction associated with larger size and dense living (Simmel, Frisby and Featherstone, 1997).

Wirth (1938) mentioned that population size, population density, and population heterogeneity were three key elements of urbanism. Each of these elements tends to increase urban alienation and anomie (Fisher, 1972, p. 191). A number of studies have shown that size of community is linked with urban alienation. Fischer (1973) found that the size of community was significantly linked with individual distrust and social isolation. However, few studies have considered the impact of the other two factors on urban alienation, and none



Abstract

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have considered the impact of all three of them together.

Another study conducted with Kasarda and Janowitz (1974) found that community attachment may be more related to the length of time that individuals reside in a community. They concluded that the length of residence is more appropriate than the population size and density for the study of community attachment in mass society. However, a reanalysis of the question by Battel et al. (1979) obtained results which conflicted with the previous findings. They found that size of place was the most important determinant of community attachment (Buttel, Martinson and Wilkening, 1979).

The above discussions show that community size is a principle community variable that affects various aspects of social life in the community including community attachment. Individual reaction to living conditions may be shaped by attachment with community and development of the community. Both variables constitute the social capital enjoyed by the persons. Therefore, suffering from social problems may be expected to be moderated by community size.

A study of suffering from social problems is important for two main reasons: first, researchers have often studied social problems reflecting one or two problems, but their findings may have been implicitly over generalized to all rural communities. Second, this magnitude has terminated from understanding relations among social problems and community size.

The purpose of this study was to identify the level of suffering from social problems and test the moderator effect of community size on suffering from social problems.

2. Materials and methods

This study was conducted in Gharbia Governorate, Egypt. The largest and the smallest village in terms of population size in Kafr El-Zayyat district were purposively chosen for the study. The features of the two sample villages are shown in table 1.

Data in the table reveal a clear contrast between the two villages in terms of population, resources, services and level of development.

A systematic sample of residents in the age category 18-40 years was drawn. The target sample size was 552 residents. Sample persons were interviewed using a structured interview schedule. The number of completed interview schedules is 446 representing about 84.42 % of the target sample.

Table 1. The Features of the Sample Villages

Feature	Large village	Small village
Population size	80586	4397
Area of agricultural land*	1959	558
Local unit exists	yes	no
schools	Primary, preparatory and secondary school	Primary
Health organization	Rural social center	Rural clinic
Communication facility	Automatic phone center	Semi-automatic phone center
Rank on (HDI)	Top	Bottom
Other service organizations:	Police station Youth club Farm cooperative Village bank Post office Community Development Society	None

Based on Feddan: 1 Feddan=0.42 Hectares

Table 2. Numbers of Items for Each Scale and Its Alpha Coefficient

Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Suffering from smoking	4	.90
Suffering from tutors	4	.90
Suffering from corruption	4	.80
Suffering from the misuse of leisure time	4	.70
Suffering from family conflicts	10	.88
Suffering from maladaptation with the educational system	11	.95
Suffering from difficulty in accepting local cultures	4	.77
Suffering from rising marriage ages	10	.93
Suffering from lack of economic resources	7	.86
Suffering from weak social relationships	6	.73
Suffering from bad health	6	.75
Suffering from violence	6	.82
Suffering from addiction	4	.92

The interview schedule contained 80 items designed to assess suffering from 13 social problems. Responses to each item were severe suffering, suffering, mild suffering, and not suffering. Those responses were scored 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

To assess whether the items intended to assess suffering from each social problem constitute a reliable scales, Cronbach's alpha was computed. The numbers of items for each scale and alpha coefficients for the 13 scales are showed in table 2.

Factor analysis was conducted on problem suffering scores for the total sample and from respondents of each community separately in order to identify the moderator effect of community size on the structure of problem suffering by respondents.

Principal component analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation was conducted to assess the underlying structure for the 13 scales of the suffering from the social problems. Four factors were obtained. After rotation, the first factor accounted for 13.63% of the variance in all problems suffering score. Suffering from the five social problems of smoking, corruption in government organizations, misuse of leisure time, violence, and addiction loaded in this factor. This factor can be labeled the behavioral factor as in mainly encompasses undesired personal behaviors.

The second factor accounted for 12.92% of the variance in problem suffering score. Suffering from the four social problems of family conflicts, lack of economic resources, weak social relationships and bad health loaded on this factor. Apparently, those problems reflect individual affiliation to the existing social institutions family and economy as well as to the community as a whole. Since such components are interactions and/or relationships they may be representative of the existing social structure. Therefore, this factor may be named the social structural factor.

The third factor accounted for 10.65% of the total variance in problem suffering score with the two problems of tutors and maladaptation with the educational system. This factor alternately educational and may be named the educational factor.

The fourth factor accounted for 9.97% of the total variance in problem suffering score with the two problems of ethnocentrism and rising marriage ages loading on it. This factor may be named the cultural factor as it expresses basically social norms.

Table 5, 6, and 7 in the results section displays the items and factor loadings for the rotated factors, with loadings less than .35 omitted to improve clarity.

3. Results and discussion

Following is a presentation of the study results. The presentation is organized in three successive sections:

3.1 Suffering from Social Problems by Respondents:

Table 3, presents the mean scores of suffering from the social problem of concern in this study by the total sample of respondents. Figures in the table reveal that mean problem suffering scores vary widely from a low of 1.23 points for addiction to a high 3.49 points for rising marriage ages. Problems may be categorized into three categories according to the mean scores as follows:

3.1.1 Problem from which respondents express severe suffering with mean scores more than three points. This category includes the two problems of rising marriage ages, and ethnocentrism with mean scores of 3.49 and 3.23; respectively.

3.1.2 Problems from which respondents expressed suffering with mean scores more than two points. This category includes the six problems of corruption in government organizations, family conflicts, lack of economic resources, maladaptation with the educational system, weak social relationships, and tutoring with mean suffering scores of 2.69, 2.41, 2.40, 2.20, 2.20, and 2.08; respectively.

3.1.3 Problem from which respondents express mild suffering with mean score more than one point. This category includes the five problems of bad health, violence, smoking, misuse of leisure time, and addition with means suffering score of 1.94, 1.87, 1.73, 1.68, and 1.23; respectively.

Table 3. Means of Suffering from Social Problems and those Ranking

Problem	Mean	Rank
Suffering from smoking	1.730	11
Suffering from tutoring	2.080	8
Suffering from corruption	2.690	3
Suffering from the misuse of leisure time	1.680	12
Suffering from family conflicts	2.410	4
Suffering from maladaptation with the educational system	2.200	6
Suffering from ethnocentrism	3.230	2
Suffering from rising marriage ages	3.490	1
Suffering from lack of economic resources	2.400	5
Suffering from weak social relationships	2.200	6
Suffering from bad health	1.94	9
Suffering from violence	1.87	10
Suffering from addiction	1.23	13

The above findings seem to indicate that rural youth are suffering from a diversity of problems so that the popular trinity of poverty, ignorance, and illness is not valid any more to describe the actual contemporary situation. Although poverty and illness are still in the scene as expressed in lack of economic resources, and bad health, they are not the top one. They are actually exceeded by rising marriage ages, ethnocentrism, corruption in government organizations and family conflicts. Still, the indigenous asset of primary type of social relationships in rural areas seems to be dominating as indicated by such problems as family conflicts and weak social relationships. Rural development strategy, policy and programs need to take into consideration those implications if they are to bring about actual positive achievement.

3.2 Suffering from Social Problems by Community Size:

Table 4, presents the means of problem suffering by respondents grouped according to community size and the t-values to test the significance of differences. Figures show that the moderator effect of community size on problem suffering was not the same for all social problems. Accordingly, three distinct types of moderator effects were identified.

3.2.1 First, large community size was associated with less problem suffering with regard to the six social problems of smoking, tutoring, corruption in government organizations, misuse of leisure time, maladaptation to the educational system, and violence. This may be explained by fact that large community is relatively better developed compared with the small community. Human development may be said to partially alleviate suffering from those problems by rural youth. These findings represent clear –but indirect- evidence that rural development cures at least some of the ills of rural residents.

3.2.2 Second, community size seems to have no moderator effect on rural youth suffering from the five social problems of family conflicts, ethnocentrism, lack of economic resources, weak social relationships, and addiction. Residents of the large community don't significantly differ from small community residents with regard to suffering from those problems. However, it is worth noting that large community residents have higher suffering scores for the two social problems of ethnocentrism and weak social relationships, but the differences don't reach the level of statistical significance. This is in accordance with the mainstream social thought that larger community size and higher development are associated with the increase of the secondary type of social relations. But it seems that the alteration of

types of social relations is so slow that it is not supported by statistical significance.

3.2.3 Third, large community size is associated with more problem suffering with regard to the two social problems of rising marriage ages and bad health. This may be interpreted to mean that larger community size and higher levels of development while alleviating suffering from some social problems induce suffering from other problems. Of particular relevance here the health problems associated with development due to the environmental impact of development that affects people's health. Besides, the diffusion of urban life styles, particularly the nuclear family structure helps in rising marriage ages and suffering there from.

Table 4. Means of Problem Suffering by Respondents Grouped According to Community Size

problem	Large community N= 314	Small community N= 152	T
Suffering from smoking	1.57	2.05	-5.35 **
Suffering from tutoring	1.94	2.35	-4.97 **
Suffering from corruption	2.61	2.85	-2.82**
Suffering from the misuse of leisure time	1.62	1.79	-2.59**
Suffering from family conflicts	2.46	2.41	-.067
Suffering from maladaptation with the educational system	2.01	2.30	- 3.32**
Suffering from ethnocentrism	3.27	3.15	1.95
Suffering from rising marriage ages	3.55	3.38	3.8**
Suffering from lack of economic resources	2.40	2.40	.029
Suffering from weak social relationships	2.24	2.12	1.82
Suffering from bad health	1.99	1.83	2.26 *
Suffering from violence	1.83	2.01	- 2.27 *
Suffering from addiction	1.21	1.25	-0.89

*P < .05 ** p< .01 (two Tailed Tests)

3.3 Factors of Suffering from the Social Problems:

Table 5, presents the factors yielded by the factor analysis and the factor loading of included problems. Results in the table show that problem suffering scores could be grouped under four distinct factors. These factors are behavioral, social structural, educational, and cultural factors.

Table 6, presents the factors yielded by the factor analysis for the large community residents. Figures in the table show clearly the factors extracted are similar to those mentioned above for the total sample. The four factors are basically the same in

terms of variance explained, factor loading, and factor sequence.

Table 7, presents the factor analysis output for the small community sample. Figures in the table show that the four factors yielded are basically similar to those mentioned above for total sample and for the large community. However, the order of those factors is different. In the small community, the social structural factor comes first, while the behavioral factor comes in the second order. Still the educational factor assumes the third priority and the cultural factor comes last.

Table 5. Factor Loading of Problem Suffering for the Total Sample

Problem	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4
Suffering from smoking	0.605	-	-	-
Suffering from tutors	-	-	0.952	-
Suffering from corruption	0.438	-	-	-
Suffering from the misuse of leisure time	0.704	-	-	-
Suffering from family conflicts	-	0.516	-	-
Suffering from maladaptation with the educational system	-	-	0.587	-
Suffering from ethnocentrism	-	-	-	0.668
Suffering from rising marriage ages	-	-	-	0.897
Suffering from lack of economic resources	-	0.599	-	-
Suffering from weak social relationships	-	0.637	-	-
Suffering from bad health	-	0.640	-	-
Suffering from violence	0.548	-	-	-
Suffering from addiction	0.481	-	-	-
% of explained variance	13.628	12.921	10.646	9.970

Table 6. Factor Loading of Problem Suffering for the Large Community Size

Problem	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4
Suffering from smoking	-	0.614	-	-
Suffering from tutors	-	-	0.964	-
Suffering from corruption	-	0.378	-	-
Suffering from the misuse of leisure time	-	0.742	-	-
Suffering from family conflicts	0.514	-	-	-
Suffering from maladaptation with the educational system	-	-	0.658	-
Suffering from ethnocentrism	-	-	-	0.698
Suffering from rising marriage ages	-	-	-	0.848
Suffering from lack of economic resources	0.617	-	-	-
Suffering from weak social relationships	0.601	-	-	-
Suffering from bad health	0.674	-	-	-
Suffering from violence	-	0.473	-	-
Suffering from addiction	-	0.407	-	-
% of explained variance	14.428	12.235	11.403	9.698

Table 7. Factor Loading of Problem Suffering for the Small Community Size

Problem	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4
Suffering from smoking	0.576	-	-	-
Suffering from tutors	-	-	-	0.496
Suffering from corruption	0.500	-	-	-
Suffering from the misuse of leisure time	0.629	-	-	-
Suffering from family conflicts	-	0.470	-	-
Suffering from maladaptation with the educational system	-	-	-	0.720
Suffering from ethnocentrism	-	-	0.975	-
Suffering from rising marriage ages	-	-	0.604	-
Suffering from lack of economic resources	-	0.516	-	-
Suffering from weak social relationships	-	0.810	-	-
Suffering from bad health	-	0.507	-	-
Suffering from violence	0.598	-	-	-
Suffering from addiction	0.565	-	-	-
% of explained variance	14.985	11.789	10.961	7.988

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The results warrant the conclusions that:

a) Problem suffering is not problem specific.

Rather, it has a clear structural component; i.e. rural residents may be said to suffer from clusters of social problems, simultaneously; B) suffering from behavioral problems seems to be of central relevance, followed by structural problems, educational problems, and cultural problems; in that order. Facing social problems of rural residents, and/or coping with them has to base the priorities on such results. Correcting individual behavior of people is of top priority. It may be concluded that community size has a clear moderator effect on the structure of problem suffering in addition to its moderator effect on suffering from individual problems.

Thus, we may be recommended that community size has a moderator effect on the structure of problem suffering by rural residents. This means that rural development projects may have different priorities for rural communities of different size.

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