

Does Local Government Affect Community Satisfaction of the Younger Generation in Rural Areas? The Case of Jeonbuk, South Korea

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between public service satisfaction, trust in local government, and community satisfaction. Previous studies on community satisfaction have insufficiently dealt with public services or trust in local government and have not fully conducted an integrated analysis. To close these knowledge gaps, this study includes public service satisfaction that was constructed with the subcomponents economic support, education, and public safety and trust in local government as factors affecting community satisfaction. Moreover, this study verified the mediating effect of trust in local government between public service satisfaction and community satisfaction. Online surveys were carried out with 980 residents in Jeonbuk, Korea, and structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed. The results indicated that public service satisfaction affected community satisfaction directly or indirectly. In particular, the satisfaction with public safety influenced community satisfaction both directly and indirectly. In addition, trust in local government had a mediating effect between all sub-components of public service satisfaction and community satisfaction. Today, regional disparity between urban and rural areas in developing countries is widening. As a result, residents in rural areas are gradually moving to urban areas. Therefore, rural areas need to increase the community satisfaction of their residents. In this regard, this study suggests important policy implications for community satisfaction enhancement.

Keywords: community satisfaction, public service satisfaction, trust in local

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The regional disparities between urban and rural areas are widening. Studies have reported that residents of rural areas are less satisfied with their residential environments and quality of life than those in urban areas (Baum et al., 2010; Filkins et al., 2000). Therefore, numerous rural residents are migrating from rural to urban areas, and rural communities are experiencing a severe population decline (Hannscott, 2016; Theodori, 2001). According to Ma (2017), approximately 30% of South Korea's rural areas are expected to lose their capacity to function economically by 2040 if the population decline continues at its current rate. Moreover, migration by rural residents is occurring primarily among the younger generation (Ahn et al., 2019). Because this age group (i.e., age 25–49) is responsible for a large portion of economic activities, their departure would have a significant negative impact on the local economy. Therefore, rural areas must increase younger residents' sense of community satisfaction to retain them in the region.

Previous studies of community satisfaction have paid little attention to the role of local governments and tend to focus on physical environments or individual socioeconomic status as the most influential factors (Filkins et al., 2000; Grzeskowiak et al., 2003; Yin et al., 2019). However, various aspects of living conditions that shape residents' perceived quality of life can be affected by local government policies, as Tiebout (1956) emphasized. Therefore, more studies must examine the impact of public services on community satisfaction.

Evaluations of local governments can be divided into administrative and political aspects. The quality of public services provided by a local government largely depends on administrative factors, whereas trust is related to political considerations (Kang, 2018; Im & Lee, 2012). At this time, the relationship between these two factors varies depending on the researcher. For example, some studies explain local government trust as a factor influencing public service satisfaction (Anderson & Narus, 1990). They suggest that trust in local government must come first so that satisfaction with public services provided by local government can be high. On the other hand, many studies treat public service satisfaction as an influential factor in local

government trust (Miller, 1974; Hetherington, 2005; Taylor & Hunter, 2014; Van Razin, 2007; Vigoda & Yuval, 2003). In particular, Park (2014) divides public service satisfaction into lower levels of government evaluation and local government trust into higher levels, such as overall evaluation. The latter is more universally accepted in academia.

Meanwhile, trust in local government has not only been considered an independent variable affecting community satisfaction (Filkins et al., 2000; Petrovsky et al., 2017) but also a dependent variable affected by public service satisfaction (Sirgy et al., 2008). This combination of causal relationships suggests the possibility that trust in local government may have a mediating effect on the relationship between public service satisfaction and community satisfaction. Investigating this possibility requires an integrated analysis of the relationships between variables.

To fill the gap in existing literature, the present study examines the following research questions. First, how does public service satisfaction affect community satisfaction? Second, does trust in local government function as a mediator between public service satisfaction and community satisfaction? In this study, public service satisfaction was divided into subcomponents, namely, economic support, education, and public safety, and the analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling (SEM).

This study involved an empirical analysis of the attitudes of residents aged 25–49 living in Jeonbuk, South Korea, a rural province that has recently experienced a severe problem of population decline among its younger adults (Ahn et al., 2019). Based on the analysis, the study presents policy implications for efforts to increase the community satisfaction among the younger generation in rural areas.

Literature Review

Community Satisfaction

Community satisfaction is defined as a level of satisfaction with current area, which is based on the difference between the reality experienced by residents and aspirational community situations (Djebuarni & Al-Abed, 2000). Community

satisfaction is discussed in many aspects. First, many scholars describe community satisfaction as critical in terms of individual subjective well-being (Prati et al., 2018; Sohi et al., 2018). For example, Yetim and Yetim (2014) explain that a community is a space where essential experiences can affect residents' quality of life. On the other hand, some scholars emphasize that community satisfaction is highly related to local sustainability (Theodori, 2001). That is, residents who feel highly satisfied with their communities are likely to remain within the area and invest time and resources in their community (Baum et al., 2010). These discussions mean that community satisfaction can be measured through "quality of life" and "willing to reside in their community continuously."

As noted previously, existing studies of community satisfaction have focused primarily on the physical environment and socioeconomic status of individuals. For example, community satisfaction may increase if many amenities, such as pleasant parks, are conveniently available (Theodori, 2001). Furthermore, higher incomes tend to be correlated with higher community satisfaction, because wealthier individuals generally have more residential options and time to make a choice (Filkins et al., 2000; Mohan & Twigg, 2007). However, some studies have highlighted that not only physical, economic, and social environments but also private goods could be affected by the services or policies provided by local governments (Suk, 2012). Therefore, local government services can be closely related to the perceived benefits of a residential area. In other words, residents' degree of satisfaction with their living conditions can vary depending on the issues that the local government most extensively focuses on.

Public Service Satisfaction and Community Satisfaction

Public services provided by local governments address critical needs of residents that directly affect their daily lives. Public services have different objectives depending on the type of service being delivered, and thus, they can affect residents' satisfaction in different ways (Ko, 2013). In general, public service satisfaction can be defined as the relationship between the overall public service expectations of residents and their assessment of the services provided to them (Brown, 2007; Ho & Coates, 2004).

Tiebout's (1956) theory on "voting by feet" indicated that residents can

determine their location preference based on their satisfaction regarding various types and levels of public goods provided by local governments. Similarly, other studies have validated that public service satisfaction is a major determinant of community satisfaction (Grzeskowiak et al., 2003; Sirgy et al., 2008). For example, Grzeskowiak et al. (2003) found that satisfaction with public services, such as leisure, education, police, and firefighting systems, can significantly affect community satisfaction. Moreover, Sirgy et al. (2008) showed that public services, including education, employment, transportation, and public safety, can have a positive impact on evaluations of communities.

In the case of South Korea, the major problems confronting rural areas are job shortages, aging facilities, and low quality of education services (Cheon et al., 2014; Kwon et al., 2019). Cheon et al. (2014) stated that the lack of employment is the primary factor causing younger adults to migrate from rural to urban areas. Furthermore, the contraction of investment in rural areas because of population decline increases the obsolescence of facilities, which subsequently negatively affects community safety. Finally, a wide gap in educational quality has been found between urban and rural areas (Kwon et al., 2019).

Based on the aforementioned existing literature, the present study highlights three subcomponents of public services: economic support, education, and public safety. We propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Satisfaction with each of the three subcomponents of public services, namely, economic support, education, and public safety, will have a positive impact on community satisfaction.

Mediating Effect of Trust in Local Government

As explained in the introduction, the assessment of government activities can be divided into administrative and political aspects, which correspond to the quality of public services and trust in local government. Governments can increase community satisfaction by directly improving the quality of public services or by increasing trust in local government through strengthening democratic procedures. Evaluations of government performance are generally more related to attitudes, such as trust toward government, than new policies or programs (Bok, 2010).

In general, trust comes from an individual's emotional side, which can vary depending on the object. Trust has been discussed in the social capital theory. Social capital is built around communities, and trust is one of the important factors that constitute it (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993). In the past, it was only about the level of trust among neighbors, but Putnam (1993) considered social organizations important. Since then, trust in the organization has also been measured.

Trust in local government is the degree of trust that residents have in terms of emotionality towards local government. Being highly trusted by the residents in a democracy means that the local government is supported by democratic power (Park, 2014). If the government is no longer trusted, it will face a regime change through elections. Therefore, it is very important that the local government continue to gain trust from residents.

Meanwhile, the findings of previous studies have suggested that trust in local government may act as a mediator between public service satisfaction and community satisfaction. These studies have shown that trust in local government can be characterized as a dependent variable influenced by public service satisfaction and as an independent variable that directly affects community satisfaction. Specific discussions follow.

First, many studies have shown that public service satisfaction has a positive impact on trust in local government (Christen & Laegreid, 2005; Van Razin, 2007; Vogoda & Yudal, 2003). For example, Vigoda and Yuval (2003) determined that higher satisfaction with public services had a positive effect on trust in government. In addition, Van Razin (2007) validated that there was a positive relationship between public service satisfaction and local government trust. In other words, the more residents are satisfied with the public services provided by their local government, the more trust they have in local government.

Second, existing studies on community satisfaction found that trust in local government is an important factor. For example, Hirschman (1970) demonstrated that if residents have a high level of trust in local government, they tend to continue residing within the area, whereas if individuals do not trust the local government, they are more likely to leave their area. Similarly, Lee et al. (2004) verified that the higher

the trust in local government, the higher the attachment to the region.

Combining these discussions, we can expect local government trust to have a mediating effect between public service satisfaction and community satisfaction. This requires a comprehensive analysis of the relationships between variables. However, as previously discussed, existing studies only approach the relationship between variables individually, and the comprehensive analysis was lacking. Therefore, we conducted an integrated analysis by setting local government trust as the mediator.

If the mediating effect of local government trust is significant, public service satisfaction may indirectly affect community satisfaction, even if it does not directly affect community satisfaction. In addition, the effect of public service satisfaction on community satisfaction will be further enhanced through the mediating effect of local government trust.

Hypothesis 2: Trust in local government will have a mediating effect between satisfaction with each of the subcomponents of public services, namely, economic support, education, and public safety, and community satisfaction.

Method

Study Area: Jeonbuk Province, South Korea

Jeonbuk Province, South Korea was selected as the target area for this study. South Korea is comprised of 17 provinces, including metropolitan cities, 10 of which belong to the Seoul Metropolitan Area (i.e., Seoul, Gyeonggi, and Incheon) or are metropolitan cities (i.e., Busan, Daegu, Gwangju, Daejeon, Ulsan, Sejong, and Jeju); the others can be classified as rural areas. The proportion of the population engaged in agriculture is relatively high in these seven rural areas. For example, the proportion of agricultural workers in urban areas is 1.5%, compared with 11.4% in rural areas (Statistics Korea, 2019).

It has been reported that the majority of the people moving from rural to urban areas are members of the younger generation of adults (Ahn et al., 2019). The 25–49 age group is defined as the “Core Production Population” by Statistics Korea; that is,

they are the most active and pivotal age group in terms of economic activity (Kwon et al., 2019). By exploring population changes among the 25–49 age group in the seven rural provinces (Table 1), we found that Jeonbuk experienced a continuous population decline in this age range from 2015 to 2019. In particular, the population decline rate in Jeonbuk was relatively large compared to other rural provinces.

Table 1

Change in the Population Aged 25–49 in South Korea’s Seven Rural Provinces (2015–2019)²

Provinces	<i>Population difference by year (growth rate, %)</i>			
	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Gangwon	–6,675 (–1.28)	–6,784 (–1.32)	–12,656 (–2.50)	–9,467 (–1.92)
Chungbuk	–4,883 (–0.86)	–6,486 (–1.15)	–5,841 (–1.05)	–7,903 (–1.44)
Chungnam	1,332 (0.18)	1,437 (0.19)	–6,827 (–0.91)	–12,359 (–1.67)
Jeonbuk	–10,378 (–1.66)	–12,299 (–2.00)	–17,726 (–2.94)	–15,375 (–2.62)
Jeonnam	–10,508 (–1.74)	–10,224 (–1.72)	–15,760 (–2.70)	–12,866 (–2.27)
Gyeongbuk	–15,301 (–1.67)	–17,830 (–1.98)	–24,886 (–2.81)	–20,663 (–2.40)
Gyeongnam	–14,313 (–1.16)	–17,318 (–1.42)	–25,057 (–2.08)	–26,388 (–2.24)

Population difference by year = population in present year–population in previous year

Population growth rate (%) = (population difference / population in previous year) *100

(Source: 2015-2019 Population Census, Statistics Korea)

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through an online survey of Jeonbuk residents aged 25–49 years with a survey company’s online panels from March 20–26, 2020.³ The total number of survey respondents was 980. Furthermore, multistage stratified sampling based

² Table 1 is organized directly by authors based on population census data from Statistics Korea.

³ Due to the COVID-19, it is very difficult to collect data through a face-to-face survey. Therefore, an online survey was applied in this study.

on the number of residents by subdistrict and their age was applied to the sample design.⁴ The characteristics of the sample are shown in Table 2. There were 403 males (41.1%) and 577 females (58.9%). The average age of the respondents was 37.2 years, and 653 (66.6%) were homeowners. Finally, the average length of residence among all respondents was approximately 20 years.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Total	980	100.0
Sex		
Male	403	42.7
Female	577	57.3
Age (Mean: 37.2 years)		
25–29	236	31.5
30–39	230	30.7
40–49	99	13.2
Housing tenure		
Homeowners	653	66.6
Renters	327	33.4
Length of residence		
<i>(Average: about 20 years)</i>		
5 years or fewer	183	18.7
5–10 years	117	11.9
10–20 years	170	17.3
20–30 years	222	22.7
30 years or more	288	29.4

⁴ Comparing the sample distribution by “Districts x Age” of the data in this study with the population distribution by “Districts x Age” in Jeonbuk based on the population census (Statistics Korea, 2020), it does not exceed 1.5 times for each cell. This means that there is a similar distribution between the two data sources, and the data of this study is representative.

Measures

We constructed our survey questions based on previous studies by using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 4 (very satisfied). Respondents were asked to provide their answers with specific reference to the district where they were currently residing.

In accordance to the hypotheses, satisfaction with public services was divided into the areas of economic support, education, and public safety. Economic support comprised satisfaction with support for self-employment; the social economy (i.e., cooperatives, social enterprises); sales of local products; local tourism; agriculture, livestock, and fisheries industries; and job creation in the region. These items were based on some Korean studies (Kang, 2018; Park, 2014). Education services were measured in terms of satisfaction with information on education, quality of public education, educational facilities, and educational programs. Some studies also assessed the quality of education services in terms of educational facilities as well as accessibility to educational facilities (Sirgy et al., 2008). Public safety services comprised police services, disaster management, and sanitation services. Safety is an important factor in assessing the quality of residential environments (Lee et al., 2019), and Özkan and Yilmaz (2019) evaluated safety by considering the aforementioned items.

Further, trust in local government was measured at various levels. Survey questions asked respondents to report their trust in the chief executive of their local government, “local government officials,” and “other public institutions” (e.g., the education office). Finally, community satisfaction was comprised of questions on “overall life satisfaction” and “willingness to continue to reside in the current area” based on existing studies (Hannascott, 2016).

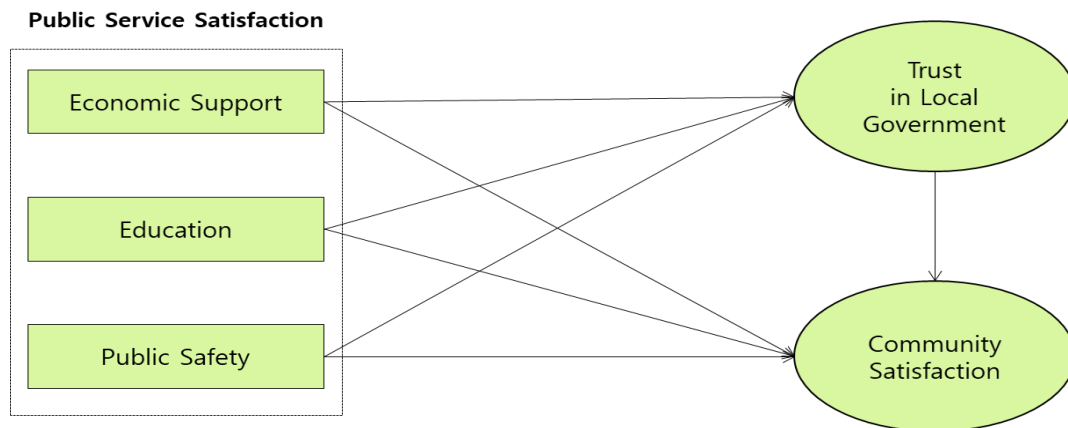
Analytical Method

Data analysis was conducted using the following procedures. First, the internal validity of the measurements was examined through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and reliability analysis. Second, descriptive and correlation analyses between factors were performed. Third, SEM analysis was performed to test the hypotheses. We treated satisfaction with economic support, education, and public safety (the three subcomponents of satisfaction with public services) as exogenous variables, whereas

trust in local government and community satisfaction were considered a mediator and an endogenous variable, respectively (Figure 1). All analyses were conducted using SPSS 24.0 and AMOS 24.0.

Figure 1

The Research Model



Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis

To verify the validity and reliability of the measurements, EFA and reliability analysis were conducted (Table 3). Five factors were evaluated based on the 19 questions, with three exogenous variables, one mediator, and one endogenous variable. For each variable, the factor loadings were higher than 0.6, and the eigenvalues were also higher than 1, thereby validating that the measurements' ability to explain individual factors was reasonable. Furthermore, a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.6 or higher is considered acceptable (Lee & Lim 2017). In this study, all factors had a Cronbach's alpha higher than 0.6.

Table 3

Exploratory Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis

Category	Measurements	Factor loading	Eigenvalue /Cronbach α
Economic Support	Support for self-employment	0.752	3.902 /0.891
	Support for the social economy	0.739	
	Support for the sale of local products	0.721	
	Support for local tourism	0.698	
	Support for agriculture, livestock, and fisheries industries	0.696	
	Support for job creation in the region	0.689	
Public Service Satisfaction	Satisfaction with information on education	0.792	3.054 /0.898
	Satisfaction with the quality of public education	0.784	
	Satisfaction with educational facilities	0.759	
	Satisfaction with educational programs	0.717	
Public Safety	Satisfaction with police services	0.802	2.194 /0.790
	Satisfaction with disaster management	0.754	
	Satisfaction with sanitation services	0.667	
Trust in Local Government	Trust in local government officials	0.765	2.321 /0.866
	Trust in other public institutions	0.744	
	Trust in chief executives of local government	0.701	
Community Satisfaction	Willing to continue to reside in current area	0.854	1.556 /0.635
	Overall life satisfaction	0.787	

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) = 0.944; Bartlett sphericity test = 0.000.

Descriptive and Correlation Analyses

Table 4 shows the results of the descriptive and correlation analyses among factors. First, satisfaction with public safety received the highest rating among the subcomponents of public service satisfaction at 2.93, whereas trust in local government had the lowest score at 2.45. Community satisfaction was suitably high at 3.10. Furthermore, there was a positive correlation among all factors at the 99% confidence level.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Between Factors

Factor	Mean	Std. Dev.	1	2	3	4	5
1 Economic Support	2.55	±0.607	1				
2 Education	2.71	±0.647	0.660 **	1			
3 Public Safety	2.93	±0.520	0.637 **	0.660 **	1		
4 Trust in Local Government	2.45	±0.689	0.677 **	0.651 **	0.618 **	1	
5 Community Satisfaction	3.10	±0.731	0.251 **	0.253 **	0.329 **	0.269 **	1

** $p < 0.01$.

Structural Equation Modeling

We conducted an SEM analysis by establishing a path relationship between factors for hypothesis testing. First, we examined the model fit (Table 5) and determined that all indicators had acceptable levels. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis are presented in the Appendix 1.

Table 5

Model Fit

	Chisq/df	RMR	GFI	AGFI	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
Model fit	2.771	0.015	0.963	0.948	0.967	0.959	0.979	0.973	0.979
Criteria	<3	≤0.05	≥0.9	≥0.9	≥0.9	≥0.9	≥0.9	≥0.9	≥0.9

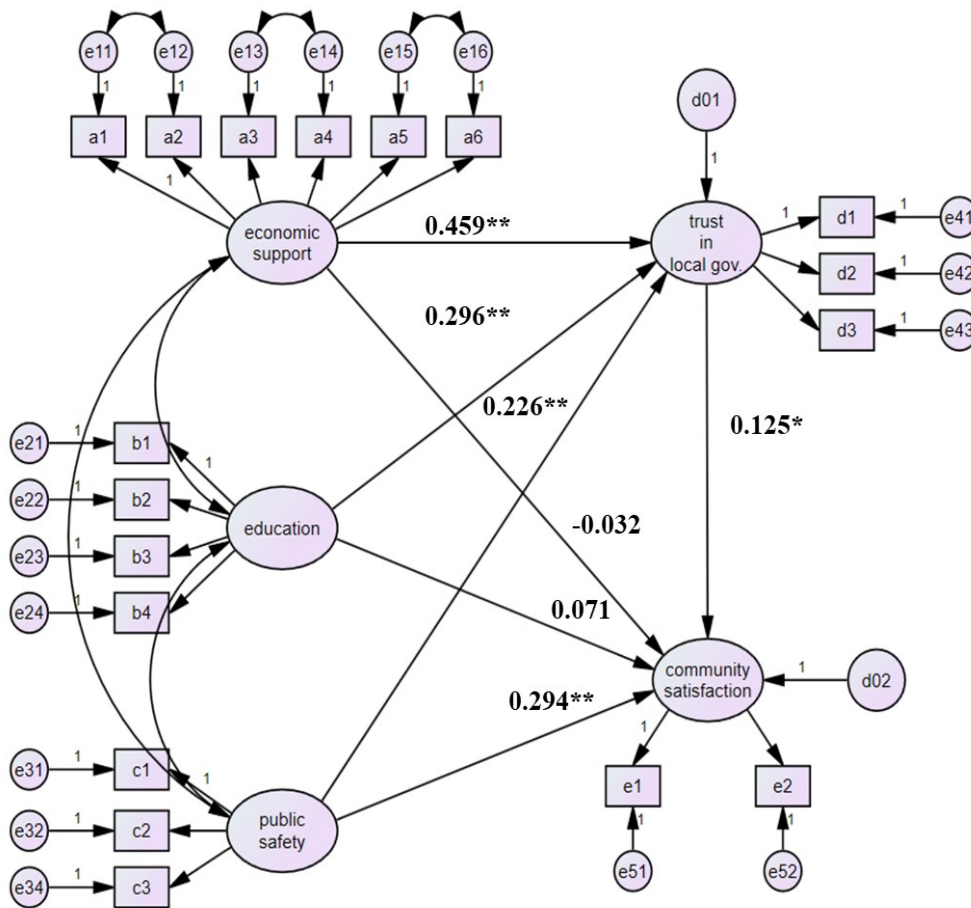
Note. Chisq/df(Chi Square/degrees of freedom); RMR(Root Mean square Residual); GFI(Goodness of Fit Index); AGFI(Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index); NFI(Normed Fit Index); RFI(Relative Fit Index); IFI(Incremental Fit Index); TLI(Tucker-Lewis Index); CFI(Comparative Fit Index)

We then turn to the specific results of SEM (Figure 2). In particular, among the subcomponents of public service satisfaction, only satisfaction with public safety services was shown to have a direct positive impact on community satisfaction. However, satisfaction with economic support and education services had a positive impact on community satisfaction indirectly, with trust in local government as a

mediator. This finding indicates that community satisfaction may increase as public service satisfaction increases. Moreover, all the subcomponents of public service satisfaction had a positive impact on trust in local government, and trust in local government affected community satisfaction positively. Based on these results, we can conclude that trust in local government has a mediating effect on the relationship between public service satisfaction and community satisfaction.

Figure 2

Structural Equation Modeling Analysis



* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

We also conducted a Sobel test to confirm the significance of the indirect effect (Table 6). The Sobel test is commonly used to determine the statistical significance of an indirect effect (MacKinnon et al., 2002). We found that the indirect effect of trust in local government was significant for all subcomponents of public service satisfaction and community satisfaction. The size of the indirect effect was the greatest between

economic support satisfaction and community satisfaction. Furthermore, the type of indirect effect differed across the subcomponents of public service. That is, satisfaction with economic support and education services had no direct effect on community satisfaction, and thus, trust in local government played a perfect mediating role in those instances. Satisfaction with public safety services had a direct effect on community satisfaction; therefore, in this case, trust in local government was a partial mediator. This finding indicates that the mediating effect of trust in local government was more important between the first two subcomponents (economic support and education services) and community satisfaction.⁵

Table 6

Test of Statistical Significance for Indirect Effects

Path	Effect size	Sobel test		
		z	p-value	
Eco. Sup. → Trust in Local Gov. → Community Satisfaction	0.057*	2.362	0.02	Perfect
Edu. → Trust in Local Gov. → Community satisfaction	0.037*	2.309	0.02	Perfect
Pub. Safe. → Trust in Local Gov. → Community satisfaction	0.028*	2.065	0.04	Partial

Note. Eco. Sup.: Economic Support; Edu: Education; Pub. Safe.: Public Safety; Trust in Local Gov.: Trust in Local Government.

* $p < 0.05$.

Discussion

The aforementioned results have several implications for the relationships between public service satisfaction, trust in local government, and community satisfaction.

⁵ Using SPSS, this study conducted additional verification in accordance with the mediation effect analysis procedure recommended by Baron & Kenny (1986). All models included control variables (i.e., sex, age, income, housing tenure, length of residence). As a result, it was similar to results of SEM. The results are presented in Appendix 2.

First, public service satisfaction was shown to have direct or indirect effects on community satisfaction depending on the subcomponent. In particular, satisfaction with economic support and education services had indirect effects through trust in local government, and public safety satisfaction had both direct and indirect effects. In other words, the higher the satisfaction with public services, the higher the community satisfaction. This finding is an empirical verification of Tiebout's theory that local government can be crucial to community satisfaction for residents. Furthermore, previous studies have also explained that satisfaction with public services provided by local governments is a significant factor in community satisfaction (Filkins et al., 2000; Theodori, 2001).

Among the subcomponents of public service satisfaction, public safety satisfaction was found to have significant effects on both direct and indirect aspects of community satisfaction. This finding is likely a result of increasing perceptions of the importance of public safety today (Huimin et al., 2020). We operationalized public safety in terms of sanitation services, police services, and disaster management. Recently, with COVID-19 spreading worldwide, including South Korea, maintaining the cleanliness of residential areas through frequent disinfection has been one of the most crucial public services. Moreover, Kadar et al. (2019) explained that rural areas have fewer inhabitants who can act as safety monitors themselves, thereby making people more exposed to crime. Finally, rural areas are relatively underdeveloped, with many old houses and poor drainage infrastructure that create a risk of greater damage in the event of a fire or flood. Therefore, residents in rural areas are more conscious of public safety.

The results of this study reinforce the need for local governments in rural areas to improve the quality of public safety services for increasing community satisfaction. In particular, police services in rural areas should be strengthened, and older facilities that could suffer greater damage from fires or floods should be inspected periodically. Furthermore, disinfecting should be performed thoroughly to prevent the spread of infectious diseases to the community.

Second, trust in local government was found to have a mediating role between all subcomponents of public service satisfaction and community satisfaction. In particular, this finding indicated a perfect mediating effect for the subcomponents of

economic support and education services. That is, although these services do not affect community satisfaction directly, they have a significant impact when mediated by trust in local government. Furthermore, the mediating effect size of trust in local government was greatest between economic support services satisfaction and community satisfaction. In previous studies, government economic performance was also identified as a significant influence on trust in government (Lawrence, 1997). Moreover, rural areas tend to prioritize revitalizing the local economy (De Guzman et al., 2020; Yin et al., 2019), and the younger generation is primarily responsible for economic activities in the region. Therefore, if local governments wish to pursue increasing community satisfaction by paying attention to its economic services, they should also consider efforts to gain trust.

According to the results of this study, trust in local government is crucial in increasing community satisfaction. Many studies today tend to focus solely on the administrative aspects of local government (Dolan et al., 2013; Case & Deaton, 2015). This is based on the New Public Management (NPM) theory based on entrepreneurship. Of course, it is also very important to increase satisfaction by providing public services to residents effectively. However, as with the results of this study, community satisfaction could be further enhanced if local government trust is considered on a political level. Therefore, local governments must ensure a high level of public trust through their political functions in addition to increasing public service satisfaction through administrative actions.

Conclusion

This study offers the following contributions. First, it presents policy implications for the migration of younger adults in rural areas today. This study narrows the research target and increases the appropriateness with the purpose of the study by collecting the first data from the online survey. In this way, it directly addresses a serious social problem, which should increase the usefulness of the research findings. Second, the role of local governments was examined empirically in relation to community satisfaction in rural areas. In this process, we analyzed the evaluation of local governments in various ways, thereby dividing their functions into administrative and

political aspects. Because prior studies of community satisfaction have primarily focused on physical environments in residential areas, this is a crucial difference.

The policy implications of this study are as follows: Specifically, in terms of public services, public safety should be prioritized. In addition, it is also important for local governments to increase their trust levels, which will require greater transparency and fairness. As such, local governments need to consider not only the administrative but also the political aspects to increase community satisfaction of the younger generation.

Meanwhile, the regional disparity between urban and rural areas is widening globally. In particular, regional disparities are more severe in developing countries (Gazze & Abubakar, 2018; OECD, 2020). South Korea also suffers from various social problems because of regional disparities, the severity of which has been highlighted by the Organisation on Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2020). Therefore, dealing with this problem in rural areas of South Korea could set a good example for developing countries.

Finally, this study may be affected by evaluation errors in relation to resident responses to the questions on satisfaction with public services (Kelly & Swindell, 2002). That is, we cannot exclude the possibility that residents responded without accurately understanding the services provided by local governments. In this work, we used terms with which residents should already have been familiar as they have completed prior social surveys to minimize these errors. However, the possibility of such evaluation errors cannot be ruled out.

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Appendix 1

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

	Items	Standard coefficient	S. E	C.R	p-Value
a1	←	0.780	-	-	
a2	←	0.750	0.034	26.403	**
a3	←	0.812	0.039	25.833	**
a4	←	0.770	0.041	24.220	**
a5	←	0.698	0.040	22.048	**
a6	←	0.686	0.043	21.595	**
b1	←	0.827	0.030	31.905	**
b2	←	0.780	0.030	29.138	**
b3	←	0.854	0.030	33.556	**
b4	←	0.858	-	-	
c1	←	0.701	0.047	20.274	**
c2	←	0.785	0.050	22.313	**
c3	←	0.760	-	-	
d1	←	0.803	-	-	
d2	←	0.862	0.037	29.499	**
d3	←	0.820	0.035	27.897	**
e1	←	0.770	0.102	10.987	**
e2	←	0.608	-	-	

** $p < 0.01$.

Appendix 2

Mediation Effect Analysis for SPSS

	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3	
	DV: Community Satisfaction		DV: Trust in Local Government		DV: Community Satisfaction	
	B (S.E)	β	B (S.E)	β	B (S.E)	β
(Constant)	0.709 (0.177)	-	-0.210 (0.134)	-	0.747 (0.176)	-
Sex (Ref. male)	0.064 (0.040)	0.046	-0.049 (0.031)	-0.035	0.073 (0.040)	0.052
Age	0.004 (0.003)	0.049	0.004 (0.002)	0.041	0.004 (0.003)	0.042
Income	0.041 (0.012)	0.102**	-0.009 (0.009)	-0.022	0.043 (0.012)	0.106**
Housing tenure (Ref. renters)	0.049 (0.044)	0.033	0.012 (0.033)	0.009	0.047 (0.043)	0.032
Length of residence	0.001 (0.000)	0.149**	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.019	0.001 (0.000)	0.152**
Economic Support	0.132 (0.046)	0.116**	0.430 (0.035)	0.378**	0.055 (0.049)	0.049
Education	0.155 (0.042)	0.146**	0.322 (0.032)	0.302**	0.098 (0.044)	0.092*
Public Safety	0.261 (0.048)	0.203**	0.226 (0.037)	0.175**	0.221 (0.049)	0.171**
Trust in Local Government	-	-	-	-	0.178 (0.042)	0.178**
R ²	0.224		0.554		0.238	
F	34.944**		150.506**		33.619**	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Baron & Kenny (1986)'s Mediation Effect Analysis Process

Step	Regression equations	Conditions
Step 1	$Y = \beta_{10} + \beta_{11}X$	β_{11} should be significant.
Step 2	$M = \beta_{20} + \beta_{21}X$	β_{21} should be significant.
Step 3	$Y = \beta_{30} + \beta_{31}X + \beta_{32}M$	β_{32} should be significant. β_{11} should be greater than β_{31} .

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