

Review on “Why the Definition of Rurality is Contextual?”

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Abstract

The objective of this review was to give account on the different definitions given by different scholars on rurality. The term rurality is very vague and single definition. Different scholars use different approach like population density, social characteristics, and distance from urban, availability of infrastructure. Such absence of uniformity in defining rurality makes difficult to make to give single definition. Peoples always try to differentiate between rural and urban in terms of the degree of Village (far from urban), but sometimes there is situation were no border between urban and rural, in this case it is very challenging to isolate from which part is rural or urban . On the other hand, sometimes the definition for rurality and urban may depend on perception of dweller. an area which accounts 5-10,00 human population is defined as rural. However, in china we may get more than this figure in a given rural area. Sometimes even though the population size is enough to classify a certain area in to urban but if there is no infrastructure then the town is definitely considered as rural. Other scholars defined rurality based on the type of activity especially agricultural work. argue that the definition of rurality based on Agricultural work may not represent the definition of rurality in developed countries , due to the fact that it allows less job opportunity, beside to this some peoples prefer to live in country side to get fresh air, summer break, recreation with nature without involving in agricultural work. Therefore, the definition of rurality is contextual since it depends on who define it, from what context and from which country point of view.

Key words: Rurality, Agriculture, Population size

Introduction

Having clear definition on rurality is a base for policy makers to identify what type of intervention should be given to the rural community to bring rural development. However, the term rurality is very wide, no exact definition (Wiggins & Proctor, 2001). According to Different researchers use different approach to define rurality for example population density as well as social characteristics (Phillimore and Reading, 1992), distance from urban (Williams and Lloyd, 1990), deprivation index in defining rural health (Townsend et al., 1986) and infrastructure (Hodge and Whitby, 1981). Such absence of uniformity in defining rurality resulted comparisons among various studies complicated. Even a number of literatures didn't indicate how the area is classified as rural.

Hence the objective of this review was to give account on the different arguments rised on the definition of rurality.

Discussion

Peoples always try to differentiate between rural and urban in terms of the degree of Village (far from urban), but sometimes there is situation were no border between urban and rural, in this case it is very challenging to isolate from which part is rural or urban (Rousseau, 1995). On the other hand, sometimes the definition for rurality and urban may depend on perception of dweller (Rousseau, 1995). Hodge and Whitby (1981) reported that life in rural area without infrastructure (road, education, electricity, health service, banking, telecommunication, credit and finance etc) is challenging especially in distant rural with difficult topography. Beside to this, the size of farm lands are also shrinking due to urbanization and land grabbing by privet investors as a result there is decreasing population size due to migration of the young and productive part of society to urban seeking better life (Moseley 1979).

According to Wiggins & Proctor (2001); Rousseau (1995) and Kilkenny & Robinson (1990) use population size to classify a given district in to rural or urban. According to these authors, an area which accounts 5-10,00 human population is defined as rural. However, in china we may get more than this figure in a given rural area. The use population size as a tool to classify rurality/Urban may not representative, since in some urban areas larger proportion of the town may occupied by industries, shope, hotels, schools which could reduce population size (Nicolette Rousseau BA) in this case classification of the town or village using population size might not be feasible (Rousseau, 1995). The Author also emphasized that even though the population size is enough to classify a certain area in to urban but if there is no infrastructure then the town is definitely considered as rural.

Other scholars defined rurality based on the type of activity especially agricultural work. Ellis and Freeman (2004) indicated that 85% population in tanzania lives in urban area and their life depends on agriculture. in developing countries example Ethiopia were 85 % of population live in rural areas and agriculture

is the main source their livelihood and contributes about 40% GDP to countries economy through exporting live animals, meat, honey, hide & skin, coffee, oil seeds, flowers, cereals like teff to middle east, china, America and some European countries (Alemu et al., 2009). This indicates that the notional economy of developing country (example Ethiopia) is still dependant on Agricultural product from the rural community (Alemu et al., 2009). On the other hand, Poczta and Fabisiak (2011) reported that the main economic activity of rural parts of Europe is based on agriculture but the contribution to the national economy is very less (1.4 %), and Agriculture is not considered as economic engine of developed countries. However, Archbishops' Commission on Rural Areas (1990) argue that the definition of rurality based on Agricultural work may not represent the definition of rurality in developed countries, due to the fact that it allows less job opportunity, beside to this some peoples prefer to live in country side to get fresh air, summer break, recreation with nature without involving in agricultural work. Therefore, the definition of rurality is contextual since what is rural in developed countries may not represent rurality in developing countries.

Conclusion

The Definition of on rurality is a base for policy makers to identify what type of intervention should be given to the rural community. However, there is no single definition on rurality. The definitions given by different scholars are from different prospective example, population density, socio-economic, distance from town, infrastructure and it is challenging to select one that represents rurality but all features are co-dependent to give full picture of rurality. Over all, the definition of rurality depends on who define it, from what context and from which country point of view.

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