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Research Article

Network Management--New Strategies in Elderly Services for Thai Government

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Abstract

This study mirrors the increasing importance of network management and also looks at about the devolution of elderly services or social services in general. This survey research was to develop a structural equation model of network management in elderly services. The sample consisted of 556 elderly service providers in Southern part of Thailand. Data were collected using a questionnaire. Findings show the structural equation model had a good fit with the empirical data ($\chi^2 = 767.53$, $df = 279$, $RMSEA=0.064$, $CFI=0.98$, $SRMR=0.058$). The model confirms that 6 factors: trust, mutuality, governance, administration, autonomy and, antecedents possessed effects on network performance. Trust had the highest positive direct effects on network performance, followed by mutuality, governance, and administration respectively, autonomy had negative direct effects and, antecedents only had indirect effect. Therefore, when governments have to work together with partners in elderly services, the problems become more complex so administrators should be concern about these constructs to provide service provisions so that a functional capacity can be maintained for elderly well-being.

Keywords: network management; collaborative public management; network performance; elderly services.

Introduction

In order to meet the occurred from social changed, the problem pattern changed, the public sector to address societal issues that are not easily resolved by only one organization. Coordination by network management is considered to be a way of dealing with institutional complexity (Hovik & Hanssen, 2015). The limitation of the reach of direct government also leads to the formation of partnerships (Goldsmith & Eggers, 2004). Thus collaborations with diverse partners may be helpful in

extending the government intervention and increasing the steering as well as service-delivery capacity of public programs (McGuire, 2002).

These advantages will be realized when partners share information and resources needed for an effective implementation of public programs and sometimes program imperatives elicit networking as a part of implementation. Therefore, network management is important to governments so that, the movements of social services and

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the functional capacity of public management can be maintained within public, non-profit, and private organizations (O'Toole, 1997).

Although there is considerable consensus on the importance of network management until recently there has been no systematic investigation of the specific contributions of network management per se to such performance (O'Toole & Meier, 2004). It must be studied by empirical testing to implement theoretical network management concepts in practice. Include a study of the structural model of collaborations that determine the performance of the network for greater insight. (Turrini *et al.*, 2010).

According to the demographic database of all sources, Thailand has entered an aging society over the last decade. As of 2015, the situation of the Thai older persons reveals a rapid growth of the aging at 16 percent in 2015, which is projected to have doubled to 25 per cent by the next 15 years (in 2030). The cause of this demographic phenomenon is the rapid decline of fertility over the past several decades combined with the increased longevity of the older population. The following series of population pyramids clearly shows the Thai transition from a young to an older population (Foundation of Thai Gerontology Research and Development Institute: TGRI, Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, 2016). As mentioned before, Thailand is currently experiencing rapid growth in terms of its ageing population and consequently the complexity in terms of the administration of public services to address the need to the elderly requires immediate attention.

Consistent with these points, to achieve a high level of service integration for public delivery of elderly services, coordination of services across a network of multiple and often diverse organizations is necessary (Huang & Provan, 2007). The movements of social services and the functional capacity can be maintained with public, non-profit, and private organizations. A standard and culturally-based model for network management of elderly services for the Thai Government needs to be established.

By conducted research in southern part of Thailand, as the south is a multicultural region, racial and religious. The elderly services implementing by providing opportunities for all sectors to participate in problem solving based on the concept of network management, which lead to achieve of implementation for the elderly that would be matched up with the way of life in the characteristics of that area. This would result in high quality elderly well-being in southern part of Thailand.

Methods

This study aims to develop a structural equation model of network management in elderly services, southern Thailand. Concerning this study, unit of analysis at an

organization level was employed. This study undertakes a quantitative research. The sample consisted of 556 elderly service providers in south part of Thailand, selected by multi-stage sampling. Data were collected by using five-point Likert scales questionnaires. The variables in model consisted of 7 latent variables: antecedents, administration, governance, autonomy, mutuality, trust, and network performance; with 26 observed variables. SPSS Version 16 and LISREL Version 8.8 were also used to analyse data. Data analysis was conducted by using descriptive statistics to analyze the basic statistics of variables to create a correlation matrix. Then, construct validity, construct reliability, and average variance extracted were performed by confirmatory factor analysis. Path analysis to determine the good fit with the empirical data of structural equation model.

Literature Review

Network Management

The concept of network management was occurred from several reasons, including social changed, the problem pattern changed, the limitations of administration through bureaucratic mechanism, and the push of political party. Moreover, it is caused by the need for alternative public service (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003; Goldsmith & Eggers, 2004; O'toole, 1997). There is a definition of network management by academics, it means structure of interrelationship between multiple organizations or agencies, by structured in a mutually dependent manner, without any single organization having the power to control or command superiority over another (O'toole, 1997). There are formal and informal relationships, including governmental and non-governmental organizations, work together with the public sector to address societal issues that are not easily resolved by only one organization (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003). So, public administration is dependent on working partners from other organizations, rather than on the traditional bureaucracy, which focuses on enabling the government to embark on an entirely self-reliant activity toward modifying the concept of public administration. It is important to seek a competent partner in the relevant field to help solve social problems (Goldsmith & Eggers, 2004). However, there are also concerns about the implementation of the network management concept that will lead to increased capacity. It must be studied by empirical testing to implement theoretical network management concepts in practice. Include a study of the structural relationships of collaborations that determine the performance of the network for greater insight. Network Performance Measurement in this study, network performance will be considered as a success by network management pattern in another words, it is called collaborative capacity that focused on share meaning, good relationship between organizations or agencies. There is a greater interdependence between network entities, with a

hierarchical structure that decentralizes power to other units, and can achieve the goal (Chen, 2008; Thomson, 2001).

Antecedents

An antecedent is the conditions that result in a collaborative process. Antecedents are considered with 3 dimensions: (1) resource acquisitions: as organizations work alone are often limited by insufficient resources to provide complex public services. The organization then enters into a network operation, so long as one partner in many organizations has the resources to replace the missing one which is beneficial to the organization (Chen, 2010). (2) Partner characteristics have been affected on building a network relationship. Since partners with different visions make it difficult to start working together, partners who have worked together in the past with good performance will create good relationships. Therefore, the network is more productive (Warburton, Everingham, Cuthill, & Bartlett, 2008). (3) Organizational legitimacy: partnerships are driven by righteous people in the network, and if the group is focused on public issues, it will support joining the network to address the issue. They may want to join either to improve the reputation of the organization or to build a relationship in future (Bryson et al., 2006).

Chen (2010) studied the success of the networking model of public service delivery. The results were shown that antecedents were positively influenced to the public performance. Lui and Ngo (2004) studied about networking operations. The results were shown that the antecedents are positively correlated with trust, and trust is positively correlated with network performance. The result is consistent with Kwon and Feiock (2010). They studied co-services networking in local government organizations. The result was shown that antecedents are positively correlated with governance. The results from related research can be defined as the research hypothesis as follows:

H1: Antecedents is positively influenced with governance.

H2: Antecedents is positively influenced with governance trust.

H3: Antecedents is positively influenced with network performance.

Governance

Governance is a process involving defining the interaction structure of the participants in a network which relevant agencies must decide together (Thomson, 2001). The process of creating interactions between agencies begins with the negotiation process, then, enters into a mutually agreeable process (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994). Governance is considered in two dimensions: 1) the use of a formal institutional supply for defined relationships with other units, including operational process, and joint decision-making. 2) All agencies have independent authority and

equal power to make decisions jointly (Thomson, et al., 2007).

Polivka et al. (2001) studied about early intervention services for at-risk children. The results were shown that governance was positively correlated with network performance. According to Chen (Chen, 2010) the relationship between governance and participation in decision making has a positive influence on network performance. The relevant researches can be hypothesized as follows:

H4: Governance is positively influenced with network performance.

Trust

Trust means the expected positive perception of the partner in the network over other actors that they can relinquish their untrustworthy behaviour, even with the opportunity (Agbanyim, 2015). Trust is considered 4 dimensions: 1) Trustworthy is a recognition of the attributes of other partners, by believing that a partner is trustworthy, well intentioned, and does not exploit another partner (Klijn et al., 2010). 2) Contractual trust is the basic trust that, when promised, the partnership will act on what is promised (Agbanyim, 2015). 3) Competence trust is the recognition of the partner's ability, from the performance and working reputation (Fryxell et al., 2002). 4) Goodwill trust is the perception about partners, who have good intentions, is based on good principle that is justice (Chen, 2008).

Klijn et al. (2010) studied the network operating success factors. The results show that trust has a positive influence on the network performance. This corresponds to Meerkerk and Edelenbos (2014). The results were showed trust has a positive influence on the network performance. The relevant researches can be hypothesized as follows:

H5: Trust is a positive influence on the network performance.

Administration

Management in network based is a new concept to government leadership (Thomson & Perry, 2006), who manages the boundary spanning, to create a collaborative relationship between organizations for their goals achievement under a horizontal operational resource (Williams, 2002). Administration is considered 5 dimensions: 1) Clarity of role and responsibility to enable partners to clearly understand the role and responsibilities of the agency (Williams, 2002). 2) An effective partner meeting operation is the agency participates in the exchange of ideas at the meeting and the consensus of the meeting (Thomson, 2001). 3) Making the group targets agreement to operate the agency can merge agreement by taking into account the objectives of all parties (Thomson, et al., 2007). 4) Well-coordinated task by using informal and informal communication channels to exchange views with other

agencies (Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2014). 5) Monitoring and assessing work of the partners to ensure that they are operating according to their roles and responsibilities (Van Wart, 2015).

Kapucu *et al.* (2013) studied the network operating success in the emergency service network. The results were showed administration is a positive influenced on the network performance. In addition, Ysa *et al.* (2014) studied the agency network for urban regeneration. The results were showed administration is a positive influenced on governance, and trust. The relevant researches can be hypothesized as follows:

H6: Administration is a positive influence on the network performance. H7: Administration is a positive influence on the trust.

H8: Administration is a positive influence on governance.

Autonomy

Autonomy is a process of mediating the benefits between partners and networks when personal gain is the fulfilment of an organization's mission and the collective benefit of achieving a corporate goal and remaining corporate identity (Grudinski *et al.*, 2013). Autonomy is considered in 3 dimensions: 1) the accomplishment of the mission of the partner; cooperation with other agencies is an obstacle to achieving the mission of the organization (Warburton *et al.*, 2008) 2) Protect own identities and maintain their own interests, even if they work with other organizations (Thomson, 2001). 3) Shared control means the willingness to share their own information to other agencies in the network, though, that information may take risk to their organization (Thomson *et al.*, 2007).

Van de Ven and Walker (1984) studied the dynamics of the relationship between variables in the network operation of youth development services. The results were showed that antecedents had a positive influence on autonomy. In addition, Perrone *et al.* (2003) studied the network of electricity production industrial. The results were showed that autonomy is a negative influenced on trust. Later *et al.* (2014) studied the governmental and security administration network. The results were showed that autonomy is a negative influenced on the network performance. The relevant researches can be hypothesized as follows:

H9: Antecedents are a positive influenced on autonomy.

H10: autonomy is a positive influenced on trust.

H11: Antecedents are a negative influenced on the network performance.

Mutuality

Mutuality is a shared resource that benefits both the partner and the network. Because organizations recognized that they are unable to work alone by themselves, organizations

must be complementary that causes forging the distinction which leads to share interests (Thomson, 2001). Mutuality is considered in 4 dimensions: 1) Combining resources is a combination of resources from each partner and is useful to all parties in the operation (Warburton, *et al.*, 2008). 2) Information sharing for strengthen of partners' working 3) Respect to each other, is the mutual respect by recognized the value of resources that each agency provides for its implementation 4) Deferring interests is the dependence of resources on different partners to strengthen one another (Thomson, 2001).

Huang (2014) studied the implementation of Human Services Network. It was found that trust variables affect mutuality. In addition, Schalk *et al.* (2010), who studied education, network of the Dutch College. It has been found that sharing resources for mutual benefit has a positive effect on the performance of the network. The related research can be defined as the research hypothesis as follows:

H12: Trust is a positive influenced on mutuality.

H13: Mutuality is a positive influenced on network performance.

From literature review an analysis of the relationship between the theoretical variables as detailed in the past. The researcher assigned a model of network management in elderly services. It consists of two exogenous latent variables, namely, antecedents and administration. Endogenous Latent variables within 5 variables are governance, autonomy, mutuality, trust, and networking performance. The hypothesis testing of direct effect between latent variables in the model is 13 hypotheses.

Result

Structural Model

The overall fit of the structural model was good, with $\chi^2=767.53$, $df=279$, $RMSEA=0.064$, $CFI=0.98$, $SRMR=0.058$. As a result of this, in the current study, it could be said that model shows fit to all data. Standardized path coefficients (direct, indirect and total effects) are calculated for all the variables that were in the model. The results of the analysis are demonstrated in Table 1. Path coefficients of alternative model are shown in Fig.1

The model confirms that 6 factors: trust, mutuality, governance, administration, autonomy and, antecedents possessed effects on network performance. Trust had the highest positive direct effects on network performance, followed by mutuality, governance, and administration with the standardized path coefficients of 0.41 0.26 0.19 and 0.18 respectively. Autonomy had negative direct effects on network performance with effect sizes -0.08. While antecedents had indirect effect on network performance with effect sizes 0.29, which trust as a mediator. Besides,

the administration, trust, and autonomy also had positive indirect effect on network performance with effect sizes 0.53 0.22 and 0.09 respectively. The hypothesis testing of

direct effect between latent variables in the model, it was found that 11 hypotheses were accepted and two hypotheses were rejected.

Table 1: Standardized path coefficients (direct, indirect and total effects) in the Structural Model

Dependence variable	Pathway	Independence variable					
		Antecedents	Administration	Governance	Autonomy	Trust	Mutuality
Governance	DE	0.13**	0.79**	-	-	-	-
	IE	-	-	-	-	-	-
	TE	0.13**	0.79**	-	-	-	-
Autonomy	DE	0.27**	-	-	-	-	-
	IE	-	-	-	-	-	-
	TE	0.27**	-	-	-	-	-
Trust	DE	0.12*	0.60**	-	0.14*	-	-
	IE	0.04*	-	-	-	-	-
	TE	0.16**	0.60**	-	0.14**	-	-
Mutuality	DE	-	-	-	-	0.83**	-
	IE	0.13**	0.50**	-	0.12**	-	-
	TE	0.13**	0.50**	-	0.12**	0.83**	-
Network Performance	DE	-0.02	0.18*	0.19*	-0.08*	0.41**	0.26**
	IE	0.10**	0.53**	-	0.09*	0.22**	-
	TE	0.08	0.71**	0.19*	0.01	0.63**	0.26**

p<0.05, ***p*<0.01, DE=Direct Effect, IE=Indirect Effect, TE=Total Effect

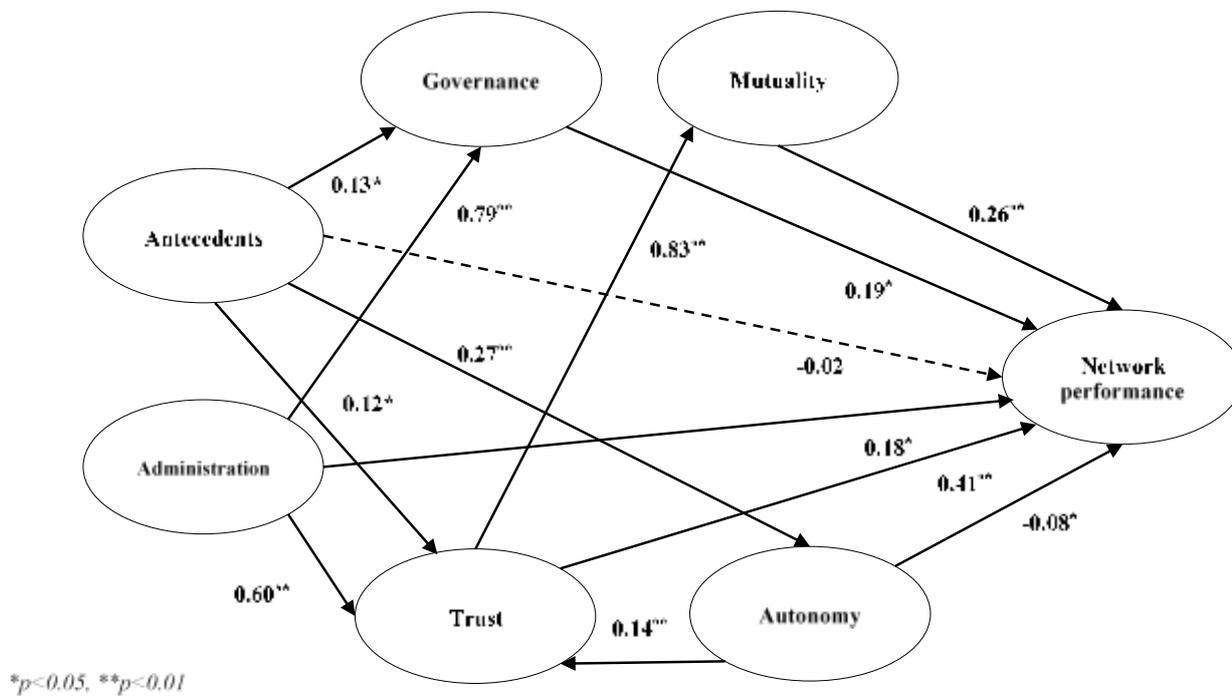


Fig. 1: structural equation model of network management in elderly services, Southern part of Thailand

Discussion

Trust

Trust had the highest positive direct effects on network performance due to trust can predict other partners' behaviours whether they have a goodwill for each other. Therefore, partners would focus on working together to achieve their goals instead of focusing on the details of each partner (Möllering, 2006). There is a greater possibility that partners will invest in long-term resources as well as stimulate learning, causing an innovative for problem solution which will lead to more success for network management (Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2014).

Administration

Administration had the highest positive total effects on network performance, as a result of collaborative dynamics. Collaborative dynamics are based on a principled engagement, which is involved with all stakeholders should have face-to-face meetings, by setting up meetings between different agencies. They should discuss about interest, concern, and value together, in order to define function, roles and responsibilities in working together, based on justice principle which consider about the objectives of all parties. The partners would understand another partners' need and interests. They would reduce the schema conflicts of interests and increase the collaborative action for more successful together (Gray & Ren, 2014; Hovik & Hanssen, 2015)

Mutuality

Mutuality is win-win technique for resolving conflicts of interest for each partner in the network. When conflict is occurred, it is necessary to share, to evaluate the cause of the conflict and to develop a solution for mutual benefit and satisfaction of all parties. It is possible to assimilate different needs to the fullest extent possible, and the organization must be willing to support resources for problem solving which is leading to mutual benefits (Hellriegel et al., 2010). This leads to be more successful in network management.

Governance

This factor has a direct positive direct effect on the network performance. This is consistent with research finding from Page et al. (2015), it was found that formal agreements using was impacted to network operating success. Due to the formal agreement was occurred from the joint decision of all these agencies; it allows the partner to accept operating results. Partners are mutually beneficial, sharing resources or collaborative activities in the network (Thomson, 2001).

Autonomy

Autonomy had negative direct effect on network performance. This is consistent with Kim and Cho (2014). Autonomy is a particularly problematic issue because

collaborative networking is not a viable partner, it only serves the interests of the organization itself, but it takes into account the benefits of networking. Sometimes, troubleshooting problems in the network may turn out to be a problem for the organization itself. The tension in decision making is so harsh. So when there is a conflict between the network's goals and the organization's goals, the possibility of a successful network would be reduced

Antecedents

The antecedents is not directly influencing to the network performance, but indirectly only. This is consistent with the research that conducted by Fryxell et al. (2002), it was found that antecedent was positively effect to network performance, which trusts as a mediator. As the public services achievement is attributed from other expertise partners. When trust is occurred, it can affect the network performance. Because the partner will join into network operation as long as one partner in many organizations has the potential to benefit the organization. Therefore, the motivation behind the network's ability is to see that partner's potential can be trusted. It helps to streamline the network's operations (Chen, 2010).

Conclusion

This study mirrors the increasing importance of network management and also looks at about the devolution of elderly services. The model confirms that 6 factors: trust, mutuality, governance, administration, autonomy and, antecedents possessed effects on network performance. Trust had the highest positive direct effects on network performance, followed by mutuality, governance, and administration respectively, autonomy had negative direct effects and, antecedents only had indirect effect. Therefore when governments have to work together with partners in elderly services, the problems become more complex so administrators should be concern about these constructs to provide service provisions so that a functional capacity can be maintained for elderly well-being.

This structural equation model in elderly service is successfully tested with empirically data. Over time, an empirically validated theory of network management may emerge by systematically development. Adding to the knowledge of management theory focuses on the implementation of a single organization.

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