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Exploring Community Organizing Sense of Community in Japan

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Running head: EXPLORING COMMUNITY ORGANIZING SENSE OF COMMUNITY

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EXPLORING COMMUNITY ORGANIZING SENSE OF COMMUNITY IN JAPAN

The field of community psychology has long paid attention to the importance of sense of community (SOC) in linking individuals and communities. Defined as “the perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure” (Sarason, 1974, p. 157), SOC has been seen as an intra-individual resource one can obtain from the structures and functions that exist extra-individually. SOC can be experienced not only by individuals who are in the particular geographical communities (e.g., neighborhoods and cities) but also those in any type of relational or functional communities, such as community organizations.

Adopting the above definition of SOC, construct/content specifications were conducted, and a series of psychological instruments were developed in the past (e.g., Chavis, Hogge, McMillan, & Wandersman, 1986; Perkins et al., 1990). The Community Organization Sense of Community scale (COSOC: Hughey, Speer, & Peterson, 1999) captures three constructs of SOC relating to community organization, namely *Relationship to the Organization*, *Organization as Mediator*, and *Bond to the Community*, and has been used for assessing SOC in various community organizations (e.g., Hughey et al., in press).

Although a body of relevant empirical research has shown the importance of SOC in promoting public participation and promoting citizen empowerment in the U. S. contexts (e.g., Perkins et al., 1990; Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004), relatively little is known whether or not those findings could be applied and generalized to other cultural settings. There are few studies of SOC in Asian countries, and no study to date has examined SOC in community organizations in the Japanese context.

Community organizations have been regarded as important community resources in urban and rural communities in Japan since 1990s, when population aging became of particular concerns to the society. By the year 2025, indeed, one in four people (25%) of the Japanese population is expected to be 65-years-old or older. Given the issue, researchers in many other fields (e.g., economics, public policy, sociology, and social work) have started paying closer attention to ways of involving elders in various community groups. They can thus keep their membership in the community and stay healthier by increasing their quality of life.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate SOC in community organization in Japan. Specifically, we will present the results of development and validation of the Japanese version of the COSOC and other relevant psychological scales for the purpose of studying a not-for-profit, community-based organization in Japan.

Methods

Data Collection

There were a total of 40 responses in the initial data collection (more data are expected), with 17 being females and 23 being males. The mean age was 60.83 (SD = 8.59). The participants were recruited from a not-for-profit organization located in Mitaka City in Tokyo.

Measures

Community Organization Sense of Community Scale (COSOC: Hughey et al., 1999):

The original English version of the COSOC was translated into Japanese and adapted in order to fit the contexts of assessing SOC in Japanese population. The translation followed the back translation procedure recommended by Werner and Campbell (1971).

Individual and Organizations Characteristics: Three measures that assess the characteristics of individuals and organizations were also included: 1) Community Involvement

(6 items); 2) Sociopolitical Control (17 items) that examines one's efficacy in dealing with sociopolitical matters; and 3) Opportunity Role Structure (5 items) that identifies structures relating to the organizational management.

Results

Preliminary Data Analyses

Item-Level Means and Standard Deviations: Means and standard deviations were calculated for each COSOC item and reported in Table 1. Although the relevant data are not reported here, comparison of the item-level statistics is being conducted between the two versions of COSOC.

Exploratory Factor Analyses: Additional investigation included the principal component analysis (PCA). The analysis yielded a total of six factors with eigenvalues greater than one; whereas the scree test suggested that three of these components be retained for rotation. Pattern coefficients produced by the PCA were reported in Table 1. In particular, the three components found in the present analysis were *Relationship to the Organization*, *Organization as Mediator*, and *Bond to the Community* corresponded very closely to the formulation of the English version of the COSOC.

Reliabilities: Internal consistency estimates (Cronbach's alphas) were calculated to be .76 for *Relationship to the Organization* and .70 for *Organization as Mediator*. The item 16 ("People Have A Real Say") had an unexpected pattern of relationship to the corresponding component (i.e., *Bond to the Community*), and thus the item was excluded when calculating Cronbach's alpha for *Bond to the Community*. The alpha coefficient for this subscale was found to be .51. On the other hand, reliabilities of the measures that assess individual and

organizational characteristics were found to be .87 (Community Involvement), .83 (Sociopolitical Control), and .72 (Opportunity Role Structure).

Convergent and Discriminant Validity: Correlation coefficients were calculated between the subscales of the COSOC and three other scales in order to assess convergent and discriminant validity of the COSOC (Table 2). Significant positive relations of Sociopolitical Control as well as Opportunity Role Structure with the COSOC subscales were found. On the other hand, a negative relationship of Community Involvement with *Bond to the Community* was observed, which seem to indicate that the more individuals connect to the community, the less they actually are involved in the community. Having already established the psychological connections to the community, possibly, the level of community involvement, such as signing a petition and attending public meetings, could have been decreased at least in the contexts of communities in Japan.

Conclusion

This paper reports the initial adaptation of the Japanese version of the COSOC. Evidence suggested that the Japanese version was psychometrically comparable with the original English version of the COSOC. Although additional analyses examine the cross-cultural comparability and generalizability, present findings suggested that the use of COSOC can potentially facilitate the study of community organizations in Japan domestically and internationally.

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Table 1. Items, Factor Pattern Coefficients, Means and Standard Deviations for the Japanese Version of the Sense of Community Scale (COSOC).

COSOC Items	Relationship to the Org.	Org. as Mediator	Bond to the Community	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
1. Everyone Pushing in Different Directions (R)	.80	-.21	-.01	3.80	0.10
2. Organization Gets Overlooked (R)	.78	.08	-.01	5.18	0.78
3. Organization Gets Very Little Done (R)	.76	.25	-.14	5.25	0.90
4. Trust the Leaders of the Group	.53	.31	-.46	3.49	1.31
5. No One Responds What I Think Important(R)	.52	-.33	.29	4.05	0.98
6. Count on People in the Organization	.49	.38	-.04	4.28	0.78
7. Goals Are the Same (R)	.47	.03	.08	2.90	0.93
8. Had a Part in Solving Problems	.27	.20	-.16	4.73	1.13
9. Because of the Organization, I am Connected	-.12	.88	.22	3.83	1.22
10. Helps Me to be a Part of Other Groups	.16	.85	.13	4.30	1.14
11. Helps Me to be around Important People	.14	.45	-.39	4.73	0.91
12. Living in This City Gives Me SOC	.01	.20	.69	4.56	1.05
13. Would Live in a Different Town (R)	.32	-.00	.65	5.08	0.84
14. Remember Brotherhood/Sisterhood	-.17	.21	.54	3.69	1.10
15. A Good Place for Me to Live	.42	.03	.48	4.85	0.99
16. People Have A Real Say	.10	.16	-.46	4.13	0.97

Table 2. Correlations of the COSOC subscales, Community Involvement, Sociopolitical Control, and Opportunity Role Structure.

	<i>Relationship to the Org.</i>	<i>Org. as Mediator</i>	<i>Bond to the Community</i>
Community Involvement	.12	.14	-.48***
Sociopolitical Control	.37**	.36**	-.11
Opportunity Role Structure	.20	.27	.31*

Note: *** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p = .05$.