

*Original Paper*

Indigenous Community Development Practices as a Substratum  
in Designing Poverty Alleviation Policies for Ghana: Lessons  
from South Korea's Saemaul Movement

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**Abstract**

*Saemaul Movement was a community-based rural poverty alleviation policy of South Korea in the 1970s which contributed to ending poverty in rural communities. Its success can be attributed to how Koreans made use of indigenous community practices in policy design. The objective of the research was to evaluate the adaptation of Saemaul in Ghana, focusing on similarities in economic conditions and indigenous practices. The research utilised literature, interviews, and observations as the basis of methodology. The research findings revealed that the rural economic conditions in South Korea before Saemaul Movement was introduced was very similar to Ghana's current rural economic indicators, which presents a reliable basis for comparative analysis on adaptation of Saemaul Movement in Ghana. Interviewees made a case for replicability of SM in Ghana. The results point to the existence of many similar indigenous rural community development practices which are prevalent in both case countries, and a possibility of developing poverty alleviation policies in Ghana based on existing indigenous practices as evidenced in the South Korean Saemaul Movement case. The researchers conclude that for poverty alleviation policies to work in Ghana, efforts in policy design must be based on utilising existing indigenous practices of rural communities.*

**Keywords**

*rural poverty alleviation, community development, saemaul movement*

## 1. Introduction

Saemaul Movement (SM) started off as a ground-breaking political idea to alleviate rural poverty in post-war South Korea. It was introduced by the then president, Park Chung-hee. Its main goal was to modernize the rural economy by reducing development gap that was growing between urban and rural areas as a result of rapid economic development (Korea Saemaul Undong Center, 2019). As indicated by Seth (2017), the late 1960s and early 1970s signaled a new phase in South Korea's developmental drive which was marked by rapid industrialization and accelerated growth. Seth (2017) further asserts that this growth was centralized in cities, which made the rural economy underserved, and so in order to empower rural communities, SM was introduced. According to Yang, Key, and Henderson (1959), SM was established based on pre-existing Korean indigenous communalism philosophies of *hyangyak*, and *dure* among others. Yang et al. (1959) further explain that *hangyak* which was introduced during the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897) was a contractual agreement that allowed for a degree of local government autonomy of villages which was handed down to the citizens by the monarch, it was a historical Korean self-governance structure which became the backbone of Korea's social laws and operated as informal common law exercised by the *yangban* (local level scholar-officials). Joo, Choi, and Kim (2019), indicated that the main feature of *dure* which is cooperation, was manifested through community consultation and support systems aimed at problem identification and solving among rural small holder farmers, who were expected to labour collectively on each other's farms so that through support they can reduce the work load on each other.

It can be said that SM was specifically designed to alleviate rural poverty, for instance, in 2012, Kim's report specified that SM is steeped in the values of diligence, self-help, and collaboration as the guiding principles, and sought to turn around the fortunes of the once war ravaged country one village at a time, in line with this, Hong (2013), also emphasises that the slogan of SM in itself contributed significantly to its acceptance and recognition by rural South Korea, this assertion is further underscored by Seong (2013), who explains that by diligence, the movement focused on encouraging strong work ethics among community dwellers, through self-help, the movement invigorated a sense of ownership and responsibility within villages which drove the inhabitants to take possession of the initiative, and with cooperation between central government and community level leaders, a notion of community level mutual help was generated leading to improved levels of acceptance and participation by the citizenry.

### 1.1 Problem Identification

Ghana has struggled with high levels of rural poverty since pre-independence (Adjasi & Osei, 2007). Previous governments have proposed and implemented several policy ideas towards alleviating rural poverty with varied results while economic inequality continues to rise (Cooke, Hague, & McKay, 2016). As Fridy and Myers (2019) indicate, these "poverty alleviating" initiatives have over the years been initiated, executed, and managed by central governments through regional and district level bureaucrats and government officials, the ensuing results has been a mixture of slow and sometimes unsustainable economic growth and slow progress (Cooke et al., 2016). However in comparison to

South Korea, which was at the same economic level as Ghana in the 1950s (Codjoe, 2003), policies implemented towards rural poverty reduction and economic inequality, with specific mention to Saemaul Movement yielded miraculous results and helped South Korea transition from an underdeveloped country to a developed country in a space of about thirty years (Park, 2012).

Saemaul Movement had a distinctive feature to it, in that, even though it was a government initiated policy, rural communities were the driving forces, and also certain pre-existing Korean indigenous community development practices were introduced as guiding principles (Korea Saemaul Undong Center, 2019). Given Ghana's current state of mixed outcomes in rural poverty alleviation, it is important to investigate whether SM, is a good fit for rural poverty alleviation in Ghana. It is also important to review what role rural communities play, in designing rural poverty alleviating policies. The research also seeks to evaluate some positive indigenous community development practices in rural South Korea which made the SM successful and to ascertain whether similar communal values are customary to Ghana.

### *1.2 Research Objectives*

The main rationale of the study is to determine whether there are prevalent factors which will ensure successful adaptation of SM in Ghana. To do this, the researchers seek to:

- 1) Establish whether if there were/are similarities in economic conditions in South Korea prior to SM and Ghana currently; and also to
- 2) Examine commonalities in indigenous community development practices in the case countries to ascertain whether the factors which made the SM successful in South Korea are prevalent in Ghana.

### *1.3 Review of Literature*

#### *1.3.1 Definitions of Poverty*

Global extreme poverty rate has fallen from nearly 36% in 1990 to 10% in 2015 (World Bank, 2018). Even though there is a marked improvement in the fight against poverty over the last three decades, the World Bank estimates that over 736 million people were living in extreme poverty as at the close of 2015. In a bid to eradicate the problem of poverty, several research outcomes seeking to unravel the mystery of poverty continue to flourish amidst a dissonance of ambiguities, contradictions, and paradoxes in definition, theory and practice.

There is no single generally accepted definition of poverty in the body of literature, however, theorists and different schools of economic thought over the years have attempted to define poverty based on its features which are; needs and social deprivation (Bradshaw, 2007; Sen, 1999); absolute and relative terms (O'Boyle, 1990); causes and origins (Sarilo, 2019; Bhattacharyya, 2016); and effects (Bessler, 2003), among others. Bradshaw (2007, p. 4) claims that poverty is essentially lack of necessities such as basic food, shelter, medical care, and safety. In Bradshaw's 2007 definition, poverty is based on the absence or deprivation of these basic essentials of livelihood. Sen (1999) opines that needs may depend on prevailing factors such as social definition and past experience, and further avows that what may be

considered a necessity may depend on society's definition of needs which may vary from one society to another, also past experiences may also play a role the determining need. Boyle (1990) in an attempt to define poverty submits that its incidence is both an absolute and a relative occurrence and as such must not be defined based on one factor or the other (i.e., in absolute or relative terms).

Sarlo (2019) attributed poverty to "initiating causes" which are bad luck-which is the inability to avoid poverty, and bad choices-which is based on the choices people make and the prospects or inhibitions that come their way. Bhattacharyya (2012) claims that poverty is as a result of a combination of factors resulting from a relationship between historical factors such as geography, disease, colonial history, and technology. Bessler (2003) in defining poverty asserts that the adage "rising tide lift all boats" is not applicable to the extreme poor since such people are immune from improvement in economic progress of the general economy.

### 1.3.2 Theories of Poverty

This review on theories of poverty is based on condensation of various theories of poverty into five broad categories, i.e., 1) personal incapacities, 2) cultural belief systems, 3) economic, political, and social inequalities, 4) geography and location, and 5) cumulative and cyclical multi-factors.

*Personal incapacities:* proponents under this category explain that the individual is responsible for being poor. According to Bradshaw (2007, p. 6), theoreticians who hold this view emphasise that individuals are creators of their own predicaments, and that with effort and diligence in work and making more informed decisions, poverty can be avoided. Davis and Sanchez-Martinez (2015) explain that poor individual choices negatively impact individual resourcefulness, even though differences in genetic abilities could also cause. In essence, theorists under this category associates poverty with "making the wrong choices" and claim that these wrong choices is what make individual become poor. Esping-Anderson (1990), on explaining this phenomenon concludes that people must be held accountable for their economic well-being and experiences of poverty which is as a result of inefficiencies and deficiencies of the individual. Rank, Hong-Sik Yoon and Hirschl (2003), note that individual inefficiencies and deficiencies encompass "the lack of industrious work ethic or virtuous morality to low levels of education or competitive market skills".

*Cultural belief systems:* under this category there are interrelationships with the individual deficiency theory of poverty and other theories that will be introduced later, however due to its popularity in literature in recent years, its distinctiveness was highlighted separately. Bradshaw (2007, p. 8) describes this category as a creation of intergenerational transmission of poverty within a set of beliefs, values, and skills that are socially generated by individually held. In essence, the individual's economic situation is a reflection of their dysfunctional subculture or culture. The individual is a victim of circumstances and is absolved of blame. Theorists under this category assert that behavioural inclinations are passed on from one generation to another within hereditary style families. As Davis and Sanchez-Martinez (2015) put it, this is due to "genetic component or up bringing". Blank (2003) in furtherance of this thought avers that, "poverty begets poverty", since children growing up in

dysfunctional families copy aberrant behaviours of their predecessors, who they may consider as role models. Jung and Smith (2007) indicate that “having intrinsically lower expectations on what can be achieved in life” is an example of how poor dynastic families can pass on poverty to the next generation. Lewis (1965) proposes that “the poorest sections of society tend to form a special sub-group with distinctive traits that are ‘largely self-perpetuating’” and that “poverty, in short, is a way of life, remarkably stable and persistent, passed down from generation to generation along family lines”.

*Economic, political, and social inequalities:* theorists of this approach attribute poverty to economic, political, and social systems which form the determining factors occasioning people to suffer limitations in access and opportunities to resources which are the basics for wages, relief and comfort. Rank, Yoon and Hirschl (2003) as having raised the issue when they queried “poverty researchers have in effect focused on who loses out at the economic game, rather than addressing the fact that the game produces losers in the first place”. The argument of social and economic factors as the main cause of poverty started long before Rank et al. (2003). In 1867, Marx’s determination of how the system of capitalism creates a “reverse army of the unemployed” as a way to keep wages low and Durkheim’s 1897 assertion that most personal individual actions such as suicide was even influenced by social systems, are examples of how economic and social systems affect individual poverty situation.

*Geography and location:* in characterization of poverty along geographical lines, terminologies such as rural poverty, third-world poverty, and urban disinvestment among others are used to represent poverty that exists based on locations. Shaw (1996, p. 29) who asserts that space restructures capitalism and contributes to its survival. Morrill and Wohlenberg (1971, pp. 57-64) submit that there is ample explanations in the body of literature as to why certain regions lack the economic base to compete and why poverty is more pervasive in certain areas than others. Disinvestment, proximity to natural resources, density, diffusion of innovation, and other factors were stated as some of the reasons for disparities in resource redistribution. Weber and Jensen (2004) work find “rural differential” in poverty, and Goldsmith and Blakely (1992, p. 125) work offers insights in the relationship between development and poverty in urban areas. Wilson (1987) maintains that rural poverty can be credited to selective out-migration.

*Cumulative and cyclical multi-factors:* this category is an aggregation of the various theories of poverty. According to Bradshaw (2000, p. 14) the theories “look at the individual and their community as caught in a spiral of opportunity and problems, and that once problems dominate they close other opportunities and create a cumulative set of problems that make any effective response nearly impossible”. This explanation considers resources of the community and individual’s conditions as interdependent. When the economy weakens, for instance, and the resulting effect is individuals with little to no resources to make meaningful contributions to the economy, this makes survival even more difficult for the community since tax payment by these individuals will decline. Myrdal (1957) emphasizes that, “personal and community well-being are closely linked in a cascade of negative

consequences, and that closure of a factory or other crisis can lead to a cascade of personal and community problems including migration of people from a community”.

### 1.3.3 Characteristics of Rural Poverty

As many as 63 percent of poor people worldwide live in rural areas. In countries like China and Bangladesh, the figure reaches 90 percent and ranges from 65 to 90 percent in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank 2000). Khan (2001) indicates that the exceptions are in Latin America where poverty is more prevalent in urban areas than in rural areas. Even though urbanization is increasing globally, 45 percent of the world’s population still live in rural areas (UN, 2014). The claim that poverty is more concentrated in rural areas is supported by Weber, Jensen, Miller, Mosley and Fisher (2005), who establish that high poverty and persistent poverty are disproportionately found in rural areas.

Khan (2001, p. 6) also claims that much of the high levels of rural poverty, both with or without economic growth, are the main cause of migration of people to urban areas. Duncan (1999), categorizes the rigid two-class systems of rural poverty based on depth and persistence. In outlining further the characteristics of the rural poor, Khan (2001, p. 7) claims that the rural poor mostly depend on agriculture, fishing and forestry, and small-scale business enterprises to survive, and that, the poor in rural areas are not a homogeneous group, which means that they have different demographical characteristics distinct from one another.

### 1.3.4 Community Development

As rightly noted by Fox (1961, p. 13), “community development means different things to different people”. This notion is further reiterated by Schutte (2015) who claims that, “community development is probably one of the most used and abused terms in the vocabulary of politicians in underdeveloped, developing and even developed countries”. According to Fox (1961, p. 13), community development may include “construction or rearrangement of physical facilities..., expansion of economic base through locating new manufacturing plants..., or organizing people and groups for social or political action to improve various aspects of living...” The United Nations (2019) define community development as, “a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems”. Schutte (2015) defines community development as “the gradual positive change among people within a given geographical area towards self-determined ideals with minimal outside interference. In short, to put people in a position to move their own goals”.

## 2. Method

This study finds its basis on the success story of Saemaul Movement, and how it can serve as a lesson for rural poverty alleviation in Ghana. Given the well documented success of the Movement (You, 2000; So, 2007; Chung, 2009; Jun, 2010; Goh, 2010; Ha, 2010), discussions about its adaptation in Ghana raises a few operational questions. In conformity to ideas suggested by Chigbu (2013), this research is theoretical, conceptual, and empirical. It is theoretical because it is a logical exploration of systems of beliefs and assumptions, applying general and specific inter-relationships between

indigenous community development practices and rural poverty alleviation that, firstly, have their origins from the case countries, and ideas borrowed from elsewhere. The research is also conceptual because it is performed through observation and examining existing literature on the subject area. The research is empirical because it employs observation or evidence, as a way of gathering knowledge for the research. This research also encompasses the use of research objectives as a guide for its operation.

### *2.1 Case Study Approach*

The approach to the study was mainly qualitative descriptive case study, an element of comparative study between the two countries (South Korea and Ghana). Its analytical contents are based on empirical data from different data collection methods and analyses. As Yin (1994) points out, using the case study approach is most appropriate when the study relates to real life scenarios, and one is confronted with multiple sources of data. It is important for this research because of the difficulty involved in ascertaining the influence culture and indigenous community development practices and beliefs have on alleviating rural poverty. A comparative case study is relevant when the variables involved require “analysis and synthesis of similarities, differences and patterns across two or more cases that share a common focus or goal in a way that produces knowledge that is easier to generalize about... how and why particular programmes or policies work, or fail to work” (Goodrick, 2014).

### *2.2 Object and Units of Analysis*

The objects of analysis in this research are mainly the Saemaul Movement policy documents as provided by the Korea Saemaul Undong Center and stakeholders who were involved in the process from the national to rural community levels. These consists of experts-at various levels-and rural dwellers. Their narratives provided human face to the research by making it more realistic and easier to relate to. Dynamics and trends of rural poverty as well as poverty alleviation efforts was a major unit of analysis in the research. Indigenous community development practices which have the tendency to affect development policy initiatives, as well as the role rural dwellers play in shaping and directing developmental programs were also key objects and units of analysis in the study. These objects and units of study were interpreted within the contexts of the case countries (South Korea and Ghana). Given the aforementioned, it was then necessary to create effective procedures for data collection and analysis.

### *2.3 Data Collection Methods*

For this research, primary and secondary data were collected and used. In line with Livesey (2006), the primary data is made up of data set used which the researchers acquired themselves through interviews and observations while the secondary data is made up of data set which even though was used by the researchers were already existing and not acquired by the researchers such as literature. The researchers employed multiple techniques in sourcing primary and secondary data. Key respondent interviews and observations were used as primary data. Various literary documents and publications were used as secondary data.

## 2.4 Primary Data

### 2.4.1 Key Respondent Interviews

Primary data was collected through two main techniques during fieldwork: key interviews and observations. Key respondent interviews were used for obtaining data. The interviews were semi-structured. These interviews were designed to obtain experiences of the respondents selected for the study, these were sourced at expert, institutional, regional and local levels. Another set of interviews were done at the rural level (local citizens). Through these levels of interviews, diverse opinions and perceptions on general rural poverty alleviation issues, indigenous community development approaches, stakeholder's roles, policy impacts and citizens' needs were identified and analysed. Twenty persons (20) of various backgrounds were interviewed. Table 1 below summarises the backgrounds of the interviewees.

**Table 1. Categories of Interviewees**

Level	Category	Key respondents	No.
Local	Government	Community councillors	2
		Opposition politician	1
	Local people	Farmers	3
		Traders/Small business owners	3
	Local SM Center	Local level SM leader	1
Total		11	
Regional/ Provincial	Government	Provincial politician	1
	Private sector	Rural development consultant	1
	Provincial SM Center	Provincial level SM Center leader	1
Total		3	
National	Government	Former National Assembly administrator	1
	Korea SM Center	Director of Int. Affairs, Korea SM Center	1
	Total		2
Expert	Academics	Professors of political science/rural development	3
	Korea SM Center	Vice President, Korea SM Academy	1
	Total		3
<b>Total interviewees</b>			<b>20</b>

This number was selected based on the assertion by Green and Thorogood (2004) that “little to no new information is generated after interviewing 20 people or so belonging to one analytically relevant participant category”. The interviews were conducted at the local level in the national language of the Korean people. Key respondent interviews involved speaking to selected individuals who provided the



needed information, ideas, and insights on the research subject. Eyler, Giles and Gray (1999), are of the view that it is an important tool for all sort of research on planning and development involving people or community. The respondents were selected at three levels: national, regional/provincial and local levels. The interviews were of the face-to-face nature. This approach, although more time intensive, provided a free-exchange of ideas and helped with getting detailed answers to complex questions. At the national and regional levels, it was done to understand the various policies and actions taken to establish enabling conditions under which SM facilitated rural poverty alleviation in Korea. At the expert group level, the idea was to gain expert opinions of professionals on the Saemaul Movement. Note-taking and audio recordings were used for recording interview conversations.

#### 2.4.2 Observations

The research employed observation as another way by which primary data were collected. It was participatory. Emmel (1997) notes that it is not the method used in research that makes it participatory, but rather the depth of the researchers' involvement in the whole process. Participatory observation is relevant when the nature of study is to determine the behaviour of societies and its indigenes within a given set of environment (Southwell, 2007). It is also effective to helping to record situations within which certain happenings and occurrences take place (Clark, Holland, Katz, & Peace, 2009, p. 5). Clark *et al.* (2009) also claim that, participatory observations involve that the observer takes part in events happening in the natural environment of the observed. In this research, observations involved processes of data-gathering procedures through inspection of situations and noting physical characteristics (Taylor-Powell and Steele, 1996). One of the researchers participated in a two day Saemaul Movement training for foreign students via direct involvement. These were foreign post-graduate students who were either majoring in community development or a closely related discipline. The training program drew over fifty students from over 15 different countries across the globe. This training consisted of presentations, group activities, visitations to model projects with the objective of helping participants understand how the Movement was formed, its transformational features, and implementation challenges, among others. It offered the researchers the opportunity to acquire a first-hand experience on the ins and outs of the Movement. Working with Saemaul Center staff and professionals, as well as community development experts from around the world helped in the gathering of more primary data through observation.

#### 2.5 Secondary Data

Literary work on rural poverty alleviation in South Korea and Ghana are in abundance (see Ho, 1979; Codjoe, 2003; Adjasi & Osei, 2007; Kim, 2012; Baah-Kumi & Lee, 2016; Chung, 2016; Cooke et al., 2016). Since the outcome of this research is to produce ways to adapt Saemaul Movement in rural Ghana, theoretical and practical information on rural development in South Korea and Ghana were of major consideration. Most of such information were accessible through the internet, local organisations' archives and library documents. Notes and recordings from the Saemaul Movement training also provided a good source for additional data. They provided clues to past visions of the

people and provided understanding of the general perception of the people concerning their struggle for development over time.

### 2.6 Data Processing, Reliability and Validity

The researchers made efforts to integrate accuracy in all aspects of the data collection methods. The collected data, being qualitative in nature and originally raw and unorganised, was organised to make it usable for the research. The data processing involved organising and categorising important information gained from the interviews and observations into component pieces; then taking specific data relating them (generalisation) to the subject under investigation. These data were summarised, then synthesised into ideas in the context of the research objectives and questions. Considering the imperfections associated with each of these methods of data collection, the researchers *triangulated* the final data in order to obtain only *valid* and *reliable* data for the final analysis.

### 2.7 Data Analyses

As a way of reaching accurate results, the relevant interpretation collected from key respondent interviews, observations, and secondary sources were analysed in various forms. These were analysed with focus on discerning limitations to current rural poverty alleviation practices, as well as opportunities for renewed rural poverty alleviation approaches.

## 3. Result

To address the main the research objective, which seeks to determine the prevalent factors that will ensure the successful adaptation of SM in Ghana, the researchers attempt to establish existence of these factors through existing literature and results from interviews. By using existing literature, the researchers seek to establish that similar indigenous community practices which made SM a success are prevalent in Ghana by determining that; 1) they are customary to rural Ghana, 2) their practice is widespread and useful in Ghana, and 3) have been in existence in Ghana for centuries.

By utilising interviews, the researchers endeavour to further establish; 1) the key success factors of SM, 2) the role SM in play in rural poverty alleviation, 3) the role of indigenous community development practices in poverty alleviation, and 4) adaptability of SM in Ghana.

### 3.1 Main Research Objective 1: Prevalent Factors in Literature

There is ample literary evidence to support the assertion that indigenous community development practices is customary to Ghana, widespread, and useful in Ghana. For instance Muller (1995) contends that cultural practices in Ghana formed the foundation upon which other organized self-help groups have been formed in Ghana, and that their usefulness in practical rural development should not be underrated. Owusu-Amankwah (2015) argues that indigenous community development practices boosts labour availability which helps in fighting child labour in Ghana. Monastyrnaya, Joerin, Dawoe and Six (2016) offer that, indigenous groupings through “*nnoboa*” has also been effectively used in Ghana as a means of facilitating credit since banks prefer to lend to groups rather than individuals.

In the body of research, there is a clear indication to support the case that indigenous community development practices have been a part of the Ghanaian habits, customs, and beliefs for centuries. As indicated by Asante, Ababio and Boadu (2011), traditional people of Ghana have for centuries used socio-cultural beliefs and practices in forest conservation and agriculture. This assertion is reiterated by Adom (2015) who claims that, indigenous knowledge systems were the only institutions in traditional way of life in Ghana prior to colonization by the Europeans. As Anane (2015) asserts, cultural practices were the mainstay of the Ghanaian people prior to the advent of industrialisation and urbanisation. Cobbinah (2011) in an earlier paper submitted that, handing down of cultural development practices from one generation to another ensured sustainability to livelihoods in Ghana.

### *3.2 Main Research Objective 2: Prevalent Factors from Interviews*

As indicated in the research methodology, the researchers interviewed a total of twenty respondents on SM in South Korea making up of experts, and current and former officials at the national, provincial, and local levels of government. A total of five main questions were asked with the aim of identifying opinions and thoughts on the stated research objectives. These questions centered on respondents': 1) assessment on the key factors that ensured the success of SM, 2) evaluation of the success of SM and how it achieved its goals in alleviating rural poverty in South Korea, 3) opinions on the role indigenous community development practices played in the success of SM, and 4) views on the adaptability of SM in developing countries like Ghana.

#### *3.2.1 Key Success Factors of SM*

On the key factors that accounted for the success of SM, respondents remarked that support from government was a key factor which helped in unearthing volunteerism among rural citizens. There was also mention of devoted leaders who boosted grassroots leadership through SM training. Rewards based on merit and performance which also created healthy competition among villages were cited as an enabler, which deepened "can do" spirit among rural dwellers. Emphasis was also placed on "low risk but higher returns" ventures ensured that return on investments were secured.

#### *3.2.2 The Role of SM in Poverty Alleviation*

Collectively, respondents concurred that not only did SM reduce the gap between the rich and poor but it also helped alleviate absolute poverty. There were references to increased rural per capita income and improved human development standards in rural areas as examples of the effect of SM on poverty in rural South Korea. There were also references to how SM helped rural communities to escape poverty through, modernised farming villages, growth and development of industry, establishment of adventurous national image, gathering of abilities, growth of leaders, and implementation of democracy.

#### *3.2.3 Role of Indigenous Community Development Practices*

On the role indigenous community practices played in making SM a success, respondents were mainly of the view that the movement was carved around these practices. Examples were the village general meetings and village development committees which were very familiar because they were derived

from indigenous community practices. Respondents also indicated that the guiding principles of SM which are *diligence, self-help, and mutual cooperation* were derived from pre-existing traditional practices such as *pumassi, kye, dure, and hyangyag*.

### 3.2.4 Adaptability of SM in Ghana

When respondents were asked on the feasibility of replicating the philosophy of SM in Ghana, the answers were in the affirmative, indicating that currently SM has been rolled out globally and funded with a budget of about \$202 billion in Official Development Assistance (ODA) projects for 2019 by the government of South Korea through the Saemaul Globalisation Foundation. According to the respondents, from 2009 to 2018, there have been 58 model villages from 17 countries. There are ongoing model villages in nine Asian countries and eight African developing countries including Rwanda, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Congo, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi and Madagascar. Respondents were very confident that the introduction of SM in Ghana is not only feasible but there are many model cases beyond the South Korean case that Ghana can model on as well as learn lessons from.

### 3.3 Sub Research Objective 1: Similarities in Economic Conditions of Case Countries

In line with the first research objective, the research seeks to determine adaptability of Saemaul Movement in Ghana. In order to effectively analyse this, there is a need to first determine and compare similarities in rural economic conditions prior to the inception of the Movement in Korea, compared with current rural economic situation in Ghana. To address this, the researchers considered four rural economic indicators, namely: 1) percentage of rural population engaged in self-employed agricultural activities, 2) percentage of rural population living under the poverty line, 3) rural inequality gap, and 4) total population living in rural areas. The researchers adopted these four criteria based on our preliminary review of body of literature on rural poverty and rural economy. These four criteria, even though are not exhaustive in determining the characteristics of rural economy, serve as a reliable basis for in-depth analysis.

For instance, Dorward, Kydd, Morrison and Urey (2004) claim that when very poor rural people engage in self-employed agricultural activities, both history and theory suggest a pre-eminent role for agricultural growth in poverty reduction in poor agrarian economies. Also arguing on the role of self-employed agricultural activities in alleviating rural poverty, Oyakhilomen and Zibah (2014) suggest that agricultural production at the rural level is an important factor in inducing economic growth.

According to Coudouel, Hentschel and Wodon (2002), using the percentage of population living under the poverty line is most appropriate in providing information on how far households depart from the poverty line. This measure is used to determine the mean aggregate consumption deficit in relation to nationally determined poverty status of households. In determining inequality gap as a reliable measure of the rural economy, Dao (2004), explains that the measure of economic situation in rural communities depend on how “the poorest in the community are doing”.

In determining rural inequality gap as a factor for assessing rural economies, Naschold (2002) advances that poverty and inequality are intrinsically linked, and that equitable distribution of poverty alleviation policies, particularly assets, “should be an integral part of the poverty reduction agenda”. In justifying rural population as measure of poverty in rural communities, the researchers refer to Ravallion (2007), who claims that the presence of absolute poverty is about 30 percent higher in rural areas than in urban areas.

*Rural self-employed who are engaged in agricultural and related activities*: this index measures the percentage of total rural population who are self-employed in agricultural related activities. According to Ho (1979), in early 1970s about 40% of rural folks were engaged in farming, animal rearing, and fishing activities in rural South Korea. Ghana Statistical Services’ Ghana Living Standard Survey number 6 (GLSS6) which was published in 2014 estimated that about 41.1% of Ghanaian rural dwellers are also engaged in agricultural and related activities.

*Rural poverty rate*: rural poverty rate refers to the percentage of rural population who are living below the poverty line of \$1.90 (World Bank, 2018). Park (2012), recounted that during the late 1960s, poverty among rural South Koreans was 35.8% prior to inception of SM. Ghana on the other hand records a rate of poverty of 38.2% according to a 2018 report by Alston.

*Rural economic inequality gap (Gini coefficient)*: rural economic inequality gap (Gini coefficient) is used to gauge economic inequality, measuring income distribution or, wealth distribution (Catalano, Leise, & Pfaff, 2009). A 2019 World Bank report that income and wealth inequality between populations in urban well-to-do areas and rural areas was 32% prior to SM adaptation. The economic inequality situation in Ghana as indicated by the Ghana Living Standard Survey number 7 (GLSS7) which was published by the Ghana Statistical Service in 2017 stands at 41.8%.

*Rural population*: this index refers to the population that live in rural areas. As Ho (1979) points out, work in these areas is often more focused on agriculture than urban areas. A World Bank report in 2019 estimate the rural population of South Korea in late 1960s to be 59%, whereas the GLSS6 report estimate rural population in Ghana to be 51%.

Even though the above indicators in themselves are not in any way exhaustive measure of economic similarities, they provide an introduction to a meaningful comparison of the two cases, and further reveal marked parallels in the two economic situations.

#### *3.4 Sub Research Objective 2: Commonalities in Indigenous Community Development Practices in Case Countries*

To address the second aspect of this research objective which seeks to examine commonalities in indigenous community practices in the case countries, the researchers sought to ascertain existing indigenous community development practices that are common in the case countries to determine whether Saemaul Movement will fit into the cultural lifestyle of Ghanaians. Kim (2012) asserts that for centuries, Korean rural communities have clung to their indigenous community cooperation customs and conventions, some of these principles formed the basis of the Saemaul guiding principles which are

diligence, self-help, and cooperation. Ghana also has many ancient, handed down indigenous community development practices, which continue to play significant roles in community building (Anku-Tsede, 2013). The researchers summarize of some centuries-old rural community practices that Koreans and Ghanaians have used over the years for indigenous community development practices.

*South Korea: Kye (gye)* is an arrangement where rural communities work together using a collaborative technique to assist each other through mutual funding, this they consolidate by forming community funding clubs (Kim, 2012; Chung, 2016). *Dure (ture)* is a centuries old labour cooperation organisation for advancing public interest of rural communities (Kim, 2012; Joo et al., 2019; Chung, 2016). *Pumassi* is an arrangement of mutual exchange of labour with the aim of achieving economies of scale in agriculture (Kim, 2012; Chung, 2016). *Hyangyag* refers to rural community education on ethics and best practices in commerce, society, and agriculture (Kim, 2012; Yang et al., 1959; Chung, 2016).

*Ghana: Susu* is an indigenous informal saving mechanism which aims at helping rural communities improve access to credit and investments (Adusei & Appiah, 2012; Alabi et al., 2007; Anku-Tsede, 2013; Salifu et al., 2012). *Abunu & abusa* is an indigenous land tenure system, with work and share plan for mutual benefit between land owners and rural farmers (Bymolt et al., 2018; Asamoah & Owusu-Ansah, 2017). *Nnoboa* is a reciprocal labour support arrange that allows rural small-holder farmers rotate work on each other's farm to reduce operational cost, enhancement mutual support, and also create healthy competition among farmers (Salifu et al., 2010; Onumah et al., 2007; Salifu et al., 2012). *Oman adwuma* is a voluntary, communal, self-help labour to build or repair social amenities. It is also used to achieve communal cleaning tasks as well (Boateng, 2013; Wiemers, 2017).

#### **4. Discussion**

##### *4.1 Main Research Objective: Prevalent Factors for Successful Adaptation*

The research results indicate existence of ample evidence in the body of literature and through interview results that conditions are conducive for replicating SM in Ghana. The findings suggests that Ghanaians have been practicing their own community development practices for centuries in farming and mutual assistance. There is also evidence that these practices are similar to the practices which were practiced in South Korea upon which SM was developed. If Ghanaian policy-makers will design rural poverty alleviation policies based on pre-existing practices, and not based on directives by aid agencies as indicated by Adom (2015), Ghana stands make improvements in its fight on alleviating rural poverty.

Additionally, interviews with experts and practitioners show that model SM projects have been successfully rolled out in many developing countries, and currently such model projects are ongoing in eight African countries with varied success rates. Given the similarities in economic conditions of African countries (van Pinxteren, 2019), and our strong community development culture, it is fair to assume that Ghana is well positioned to successfully adapt SM.

#### 4.2 Sub Research Objective 1: Similarities in Economic Conditions of Case Countries

This objective was to determine if there are similarities in economic conditions in the case countries. The findings establish a strong case for similarities in economic conditions in the areas of employment in rural communities, rate of poverty and inequalities, and population demographics in Ghana now vis-à-vis that of South Korea pre-SM. Given these conditions, the researchers infer that these conditions present a positive factor for implementation of SM in Ghana.

#### 4.3 Sub Research Objective 2: Commonalities in Indigenous Community Development Practices in Case Countries

The objective sought to ascertain commonalities in indigenous community practices in case countries. The results showed that there are many commonalities in indigenous community practices of the case countries. Given that SM was designed and developed based on these practices, the researchers recommend that policymakers in Ghana should learn from the South Korean case in designing policies so as to ensure improved chances acceptance by rural communities and easy implementation.

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