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Off-farm Employment of the Ethnic Minority Groups in Southern Yunnan Province: An Social Network Analysis

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1. Introduction

The earning of out-bound labor migrants has become a major source of rural economic growth for the ethnic minority groups in southern and southwestern Yunnan Province. Therefore, non-agricultural job employment of these minority groups has been a scholarly topic over years. Since the Mid-1990s, researchers have been studying job mobility of internal rural migrants from social network perspective. However, most of the existing studies on the relationship between social network and job mobility focus on migrant workers of rural Han people. No works concern the ethnic minority groups in cross-border areas of southern and southwestern Yunnan Province. This paper contributes to place the case of ethnic minority groups in southern Yunnan Province within the context of the literature on social network and occupational attainment. The paper starts with a brief review of the existing studies of the strength of ties in occupational attainment, especially these of empirical works in China. The second main section takes into account of the data set and research design. The last main part reports the key findings of the study, which is followed by a short conclusion.

2. Methodology

The main purpose of the Survey is to investigate employment status of the out-bound labor migrant workers of the ethnic minority groups in southern and southwestern Yunnan Province. Therefore, the survey is conducted in 18 villages along the border areas of the five prefectures of Dehong, Lincang, Pu'er, Xishuangbanna and Honghe.

The overall goal of the Survey is to gather cross-sectional data on the trends of social and economic changes of the ethnic minority groups in southern and southwestern Yunnan Province. The Survey mainly deals with household (*hukou*) mobility, social networks, social attitudes, social behavior as well as affluent information about job search and employment status of the ethnic minority migrant workers. As to the specific sampling design, the Survey is a four-stage stratified sampling with disproportional probability of selection. The different sampling units at each stage can be described as follows: In the first stage, the primary sampling units (PSUs) is prefecture (州) or prefecture-level city (地级市). In the second stage, secondary sampling unit (SSU) is country (县). The third sampling unit (TSU) at the third

stage is village whilst household is the final sampling unit at the fourth stage and one or more eligible household member(s) was/were selected to be the survey respondent(s). By ethnicity, these respondents include Dai, Lahu, Wa, Jinpo, Bulang, Hani/Akha, De'ang, A'chang, Jinuo and Yao.

Occupational attainment is measured by two Variables: The first variable is job promotion (i.e. the respondent holds a job at managerial level). The second variable is work-place discrimination (i.e. the subjective occupational status of the ethnic minority migrants at work place). The former is a binary one (whether or not the respondent is at managerial level) whilst the latter is a continuous latent factor. Thus the author designed two statistical models as follows: Model I employs binary logistic regression which enables us to understand whether or not the ethnic minority migrant workers' social capital help them obtain promotion opportunities to managerial level. Model II is to construct a structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis in which the latent factor of social capital is exogenous variable while the latent factor of workplace discrimination is endogenous variable.

3. Results and Discussion

The key preliminary results of the data analyses show that, for the ethnic minority migrant workers from southern and southwestern Yunnan Province, network has significant effect in subjective occupational attainment whilst there seems to have no significant correlation between network and objective occupational attainment. Those who have mobilized interpersonal ties in job search tend to face lower degree of workplace discrimination than those who have not. However, whether or not they mobilized interpersonal ties in job search do not matter in occupational promotion to be managerial. Besides, men, the younger and the well educated tend to have more job promotion opportunities than women, the older and the less educated ones.

4. Conclusion

Part of the key findings of the study supports the previous works of social network and occupational attainment. While social network, measured by the interpersonal ties in job search, works well reducing workplace discrimination, its effect in job promotion to managerial level is less convincing. Overall, the widely advocated proposition of the effect of social capital on occupational attainment can be generalized to the ethnic minority migrant workers from southern and southwestern Yunnan Province.

What is more, most of the basic socio-demographic characteristics are determinants of objective job promotion though there is little variance of workplace discrimination by these factors. For the ethnic minority migrant workers in southern and southwestern Yunnan Province, men, the younger and the well-educated tend to have more promotion opportunities than women, the older and the less educated ones. However, the degree of workplace discrimination seems to be independent on these factors.

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