Community Members' Perception Level toward the Trans-Local and Cross-Regional Interactions and Connections by Local Leaders for Community Development in Bamyan, Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

The perception of community members regarding trans-local and cross-regional interactions and connections by local leaders in Bamyan Province's community development decision-making process is ascertained by this study. The effectiveness of Afghan development is crucial to the project's success as the nation recovers from over 40 years of conflict. A self-administered questionnaire was used in a quantitative approach, and 384 respondents (community members) were given the questionnaire. To determine the level of perception among community members, a descriptive analysis was conducted. The research determined that the perception of community members toward local leaders' trans-local and cross-regional interactions and connections' roles in community development decision-making is moderate. Therefore, local leaders with community members need training programs to improve their capacity and capability in the decision-making process and competency in the implementation of local projects.

1. INTRODUCTION

The social, physical, and institutional infrastructure of Afghanistan has suffered significant harm as a result of its instability, poor governance, and poverty (Wardak, 2011) (Syed and Mujtaba, 2013). One of the most difficult problems that local societies around the world face is poverty (Man, 2009; Man and Sadiya, 2012). Therefore, many researchers revealed that their results of research about top-down initiatives to bring development in local areas had failed, so their recommendation is to the whole world that community development is possible with bottom-up initiatives and decision-making (Kibry et al., 2024; Dennison, 2024; Faizi et al., 2023; Okeke-Ogbuafor, 2018). Relationships are essential in rural communities to access resources, meet basic requirements, and share accessible resources and services. It also connects families, groups, communities, and organizations both inside and outside village areas (Avant et al., 2013). According to UNAMA (2017), In Afghanistan's villages, elders, local leaders, and religious leaders all play important roles. The majority of the local populace heeds their advice because they are well-respected individuals. This is prevalent throughout the nation, but it is particularly noticeable in rural areas and communities.

Research on the development of the community is vital for determining how other projects can succeed. Because communities have different structures, the focus of leadership in large communities are poor (Kuponiyi, 2008). According to an investigation, different rural societies have different leadership models, and local leaders' efforts can help their societies overcome their challenges (O'Brien & Hassinger, 1992).

1.7. Problem Statement

The national poverty rate increased from 38% in 2011–12 to 55% in 2016–17, according to the Central Statistics Organization (CSO, 2018). Recent research shows that 97% of the Afghan population was below the poverty line in 2021-22 (Gautam et al., 2023; Isaacs,2024), and Food insecurity increased over the past five years from 30.1% to 44.6%. Given that the majority of Afghans reside in rural areas, this highlights the perilous situation in rural communities. Unfortunately, most of the rural areas are vulnerable. To overcome these problems, the ability to make decisions in rural areas must improve to change the aforementioned situation, and the most critical aspect is the

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roles of leaders in community development decision-making (CDDM).

According to (Ahmadzai et al, 2016), local areas in Afghanistan are dealing with a variety of issues. They cite "poor administration, lack of ICT, lack of evaluation, poor leadership, inappropriate training, lack of collaboration, lack of participation, poor selection (the right person for the right job), and environmental factors" as the reasons why projects fail. On the one hand, local leaders play these roles in community development initiatives. On the other hand, local leaders must take on their roles in the decision-making process, and local people must decide, implement, and govern local areas.

Opinion leaders act as conduits to move society away from conflict and poverty and toward peacekeeping and security. Participatory rural development between stakeholders and the government is necessary for peacebuilding and village extension projects, according to (Kock & Turnbull, 2011) and (Zakhilwal & Thomas, 2005). However, in rural areas, such a situation can only be achieved by local leaders who exhibit authentic leadership.

Therefore, leaders in rural communities should establish networking between communities and government agencies. On the one hand, (Capler, 2020) mentioned that limited research exists on the consideration of decision-making for development in local communities. On the other hand, (Aref & Ma'rof, 2009) and (Aref & Redzuan, 2010) stated that this results in an inadequate understanding of perceptions by community members toward trans-local and cross-regional interactions and connections by local leaders in CDDM.

Therefore, this research was conducted to determine the perception level of community members toward trans-local and cross-regional interactions and connections by local leaders in CDDM. This study bridges the gap between the roles of local leaders in different communities and CDDM. Therefore, it aims to provide potential explanations for the relationship between affairs outside of the community and CDDM. This identified research gap serves as the impetus for this study, which aims to address the following question: What is the perception level of community members regarding the trans-local and cross-regional interactions and connections roles of local leaders in community development in Bamyan Province?

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The process of participation involves community or organization members being involved and influencing decisions about development programs and activities that will unavoidably impact them. The active involvement of the public and other pertinent stakeholders can be seen as evidence of this (Rilwanu 2014). According to Capler (2020), Six themes comprise the factors that play effective roles in decision-making: 1) Reflecting on the past; 2) Communicating and showing respect; 3) Promoting economic development and growth; 4) Equitable treatment; 5) Identifying and eliminating bias and emotion; and 6) Accountability.

Boyle (1965) mentioned that local people were confused and frustrated when they were not provided training for the roles that they were expected to perform in the planning process. Community members by the delineated design pattern for the functioning of the planning groups. Civil participation or involvement within a place has often been considered, from an ideological standpoint, the essence of democracy, a force that develops the experience of community and management over our institutions and lives. This could also entail lowering crime, and getting to know our neighbors. "A process in which individuals participate in decision-making in the institutions, programs, and environments that affect them" is a concise definition of participation. Community involvement can take many different forms and has been researched in a number of fields, including psychology, sociology, political science, and planning. Political involvement, voluntary work in nonprofit organizations, community power, decision-making, involvement in government initiatives, and community participation are a few examples of this type of participation.

Following World War II, the concept of community improvement was initially implemented in an attempt to improve living conditions in recently emerging countries. It has been suggested, nevertheless, that the community's theories are insufficient to comprehend what is happening in the world today! It also argued that a variety of social and political upheavals are occurring as a result of the transition into a postmodern era. One of these is a dearth of chances to engage and contribute to a community. Therefore, for men and women to become interdependent in ways that are competent, fruitful, and agreeable, participatory exchanges are necessary (Coakes & Bishop, 2002).

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(Emrich, 2000) argued that the principle of participatory improvement is that development must start from the lowest level. There ought to be real possibilities for beneficiaries in participative choice-making, and selections must relate to their future development. As Mehta (1972) recommended, the development of the villages depends to a greater extent on the decision-making process at the village level. This must be analyzed in terms of the characteristics and type of people at the helm of affairs, the risk-taking utility of certain innovative activities, and the process of group consensus for some development activities. The role of leadership in development programs should be further analyzed to study inter- and intragroup dynamics. In a developing country, it may be interesting to assess democratic leadership at the village level in terms of the exercise of free choice, group consensus, rights for self-determination, and provision of equal opportunities to all sections of the community. These leadership factors may be associated with different development levels in the villages. It may further be of great interest to study the impact of development programs on changing the outlook of leaders and their value systems to delineate their role in the change process.

According to (Mansuri and Rao 2004), the precise features aimed at using participatory improvement are a) Identification and prioritization of improvement projects via the community itself. B) Promoting community establishments to strengthen the poor skills of human beings and enable local people to work together.

In addition to enabling human and community capabilities, community development has the potential to offer a wide range of advantages at the interpersonal, character, and community levels. Religious organizations, youth organizations, clubs, and resident associations are examples of voluntary community businesses that are frequently used as a means of community development. Residents' commitment to their community, members' voluntary involvement, and locally founded businesses that address basic community issues are some characteristics of these groups. At the local level, involvement in these companies could be viewed as a way to increase the responsiveness of human services delivery, utilize community resources more sustainably, and promote social change and empowerment. Participation can help people on a more private level by boosting social interaction and enjoyment of community life, boosting self-esteem and private efficacy, and reducing feelings of alienation. Particularly in rural and small-

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town settings, social engagement is seen as a means of fostering a sense of identity and belonging that is more difficult to achieve in densely populated urban areas (Coakes & Bishop, 2002).

The perception of community members is vital in the development of communities, and their thoughts can help local leaders in the development of communities (Aref & Redzuan, 2010). Therefore, (Najafizada et al, 2017) and (Wardak, 2011); and (Man et al, 2021) revealed that the main thrust of a local development program is to strengthen the socioeconomic structure of improvement in local areas and reduce rural poverty. Local development programs include the formation of village roads, the building of small bridges and culverts, the provision of sanitation facilities and water supply, and the enhancement of minor irrigation tanks. The importance of contribution in decision-making coupled with the support of non-governmental organizations and governmental organizations has been previously highlighted; however, local leaders' roles based on community members' perceptions remain unclear.

Relationships between rural communities are essential for accessing resources, meeting basic requirements, and sharing accessible resources and services. Furthermore, it connects families, groups, communities, and organizations both inside and outside the village areas (Avant et al., 2013). Therefore, rural leadership depends on the type of social relationship structure in the society that mirrors the structure of the rural community. The social structure represents the entire responsibility and network of interpersonal relationships among community members. The different roles of all the performers involved in social action are woven into a network of relations and signify the community's structure. As the role of leaders in fulfilling the needs and desires of society is synonymous with rank and privilege, leadership becomes part of the community structure. Figure 1 illustrates the study of the framework that describes the gap of trans-local and cross-regional interactions and connections roles of local leaders that are expected and community members' desire to participate in the process of CD. The different interpretations of ideas may impact the local leaders' roles in community development initiatives.
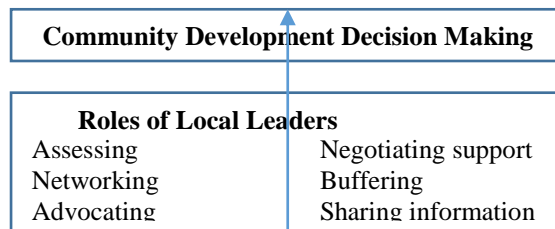
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Community Development Decision Making	
Roles of Local Leaders	
Assessing	Negotiating support
Networking	Buffering
Advocating	Sharing information

Figure 1: Trans-local and Cross-regional Interactions and Connections' Roles of Local Leaders in CD

In this research, the dependent variable 'Community Development Decision-making' indicates the effectiveness of local leaders' assumed roles for community development. The model was constructed by deleting and adding new factors.

The framework comprises two parts. The first part includes demographic factors, including age, gender, tribe, occupation, education level, and gross annual income. The second section focuses on the trans-local and cross-regional interactions and connections roles of local leaders, including assessing, negotiating support, networking, buffering, advocating, and Sharing Information. The performance of local leaders in the community, particularly in the decision-making process through the situation and the development programs started by the community, indicates these trans-local and cross-regional interactions and connections roles of local leaders.

2.1 STUDY AREA

The study was conducted in the central part of Bamyan province, Afghanistan. Bamyan province consists of eight (8) districts, which are (Sayghan, Kahmard, Shibar, Yakawalang No1, Yakawalang No2, Waras, Panjab, and Ghandak.) comprising five tribes (Hazara, Tajik, Ismailia, Sayed, and Pashtun) and three sects that are Suni living in (Sayghan, Kahmard, Ghandak and Center of Bamyan), Shia (Yakawalang No1, Yakawalang No2, Waras, Panjab), and Ismaili (Shibar). The Hazara and Tajik communities constitute the majority of this province. Therefore, this study focuses on Tajik, Hazara, and said as the main tribes. This province has four seasons and experiences cold weather. Each season spans three months: December, January, and February are winter; March, April, and May mark spring; June, July, and August are

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summer; and September, October, and November mark autumn. Climatic conditions in Bamyan province are ideal for agriculture, such as horticultural crops (wheat and potato), which are also well-known produce in the province. The most popular fruits are apricots, apples, grapes, and almonds.

The study focused on the center of Bamyan, which has a total population of 495,557 (World Population, 2024). Participants were drawn from five villages in Bamyan: Tolwara, Zargaran, Foladi, Tayboti, and said Abad. Each village had its own community development councils (CDCs), which actively involved leaders and community residents in shaping their futures (MAIL, 2021).

The criteria for choosing the three tribes in these five (5) villages are based on the following considerations:

I)   Tribal representation: Each village is primarily related to a tribe, and two villages were Hazara and two were Tajik out of the total five (5) villages were chosen (except Sadat, which no longer functions as an independent village).
II) Community governance: Each community operates under its own community development council, which is overseen by the National Solidarity Program and the Ministry of Rural Development.
III) Development status: these five villages are categorized as developing within the province.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study used a quantitative approach for gathering primary data from 384 community members based on the sampling method proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The respondents were presented with a closed-ended structured questionnaire centered on a 5-point Likert scale. The research instrument was translated from English to Persian to facilitate understanding among the respondents of the research's purpose. Data were collected through a simple randomized sampling approach, and the self-administered questionnaire was subjected to quantitative analysis using SPSS (version 22.0, IBM, Armonk, NY, USA).

The data from the descriptive analysis are used to transform the data into the simplest form and facilitate the interpretation and description of the people (Mann, 2007). Table 1

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shows the percentage and frequency of describing the respondents' demographic profiles. Scoring and analysis were performed on items measured using a 5-point Likert Scale (1: Almost Never True, 2: Seldom True, 3: Occasionally True, 4: Frequently True, and 5: Almost Always True). In this study, a Likert scale was applied to identify the perception level of community members toward trans-local and cross-regional interactions and connections by local leaders in CDDM. The mean score for each variable was then categorized into three levels: A mean of (1.00-2.33) indicates a low level, (2.34-3.67) indicates a moderate level, and (3.68-5.00) indicates a high level for each statement and variable.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to determine community members' perceptions of trans-local and cross-regional interactions and connections among local leaders in community development decision-making in Bamyan Province, Afghanistan. Self-administered, close-ended questionnaires were distributed to 384 community members in Bamyan province. The respondents that contributed to this study were 65.4% (251 respondents) males and 34.6% (133 respondents) females. the average age of respondents was 28 years. The respondent was between 18 and 63 years. The majority of respondents were Hazara (Shia) with 59.6 % (229 respondents), Tajik (Sunni) with 28.9% (111 respondents), and the minority 11.5% (44 respondents) are Sadat (Shia). Of all respondents, 15.4% (59 respondents) did not attend education, and 6.8% (26 respondents) attended religious education. The majority of respondents 47.1% (181 respondents) attended school, and 30.7% (118 respondents) have attained tertiary education. In terms of occupation, 5.2% or 20 respondents were government employees, whereas 3.4% or 13 respondents were non-government employees. The majority of respondents (46.6% or 179 of respondents) are students in schools or universities; 20.3% or 78 of respondents indicated farming as their job. Meanwhile, 16.7% or 64 of respondents are self-employed, and 7.8% or 30 of respondents are unemployed. The mean income of community members is AFG 84,376. There were 78 respondents (20.3% earning less than AFG 50,000 per year. The highest annual income earned among the respondents was between AFG 200,000 and AFG 1000,000 per year, which accounted for 9.6% or 37 respondents.

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Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Profile (n=384)

Characteristics	Frequency (n=384)	Percentage
Age (years)		
<25	188	49.0
26-35	124	32.3
36-45	38	9.9
46-55	26	6.8
56<	8	2.1
Mean = 27.0911	Min = 18.0	Max = 63.0
Gender		
Male	251	65.4
Female	133	34.6
Tribe		
Hazara	229	59.6
Tajik	111	28.9
Sadat	44	11.5
Education Level		
No Education	59	15.4
Religious Education	26	6.8
School	181	47.1
University	118	30.7
Occupation		
Government employ	20	5.2
Non-government employ	13	3.4
Student	179	46.6
Farmer	78	20.3
Self-employ	64	16.7
Unemployed	30	7.8
Income (AFG)		
AFG 5,000 - 49,999	78	20.3
AFG 50,000 – 79,999	85	22.1
AFG 80,000 – 109,999	59	15.4
AFG 110,000 – 199,999	10	2.8
>AFG 200,000	37	9.6
Not applicable	115	29.9
Mean = 84,376.0 AFG	Min = 5,000.0	Maximum = 1,000,000.00

Source: Field Data

Table 2 summarizes the six factors of trans-local and cross-regional interactions and connections' roles assumed by local leaders in community development decisions. The highest mean score was recorded for the aspect "Advocating" (M = 3.01), while the lowest mean score was recorded in "Assessing" (M = 2.55). From the table, there are

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four more roles assumed by local leaders at a moderate level, namely networking; negotiating support; buffering; and sharing information. Although all aspects recorded moderate scores, they should be further strengthened for community development.

Table 2: Overall Level of Respondents' Perceptions of the Trans-local and Cross-regional Interactions and Connections' Roles of Local Leaders in CDDM (n=384)

Roles	Level	Mean	S.D.
Networking	Moderate	2.87	1.33
Advocating	Moderate	3.01	1.39
Negotiating Supports	Moderate	2.82	1.33
Buffering	Moderate	2.63	1.37
Assessing	Moderate	2.55	1.32
Sharing Information	Moderate	2.67	1.40
Total Average Mean		2.75	1.35

Source: Field Data 2020

Overall, the mean score of trans-local and cross-regional interactions and connections by local leaders was 2.75. Table 3 presents the mean score of the respondent's perception as moderate. To conclude, the moderate level of the above-mentioned roles assumed by local leaders in decision-making on community development indicates that elected leaders are making efforts to improve community development. The results also show that local leaders need more support and encouragement to enhance their understanding of the roles and performance of local leaders. It is acceptable in such a community, especially in a war-torn and developing nation like Afghanistan, which requires thorough reconstruction and education reformation with the aid provided by the UN.

Table 3: Overall Level of Respondents' Perceptions of the Trans-local and Cross-regional Interactions and Connections' Roles of Local Leaders in Decision-making (n=384)

Level	Mean	S.D.
High (3.67-5.0)		
Moderate (2.34-3.66)	**2.75**	**1.35**
Low (1-2.33)		

Source: Field Data 2020

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Table 4: Perception Score of Networking (n=384)

Statements	Score Frequency (Percentage)					Mean	SD
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**		
Local leaders play a role in networking with other communities.	75 (19.5)	93 (24.2)	86 (22.4)	65 (16.9)	65 (16.9)	2.88	1.36
A local leader communicates effectively and continually with other communities.	66 (17.2)	102 (26.6)	106 (27.6)	64 (16.7)	46 (12.0)	2.80	1.25
The local leader establishes trust and supports relationships with other communities.	64 (16.7)	94 (24.5)	87 (22.7)	96 (25.0)	43 (11.2)	2.90	1.26
A local leader facilitates networking among communities and solve problems.	73 (19.0)	79 (20.6)	108 (28.1)	78 (20.3)	46 (12.0)	2.86	1.27
A local leader facilitates networking among communities for development purposes.	78 (20.3)	102 (26.6)	75 (19.5)	75 (19.5)	54 (14.1)	2.80	1.34
Local leaders provide services and assistance for visitors and encourage community members to network with them for a long time.	103 (26.8)	67 (17.4)	83 (21.6)	64 (16.7)	67 (17.4)	2.80	1.44
Local authorities are keen to preserve harmony and tranquility among communities that are confined by their own borders.	70 (18.2)	71 (18.5)	93 (24.2)	69 (18.0)	81 (21.1)	3.05	1.39
Overall Mean						**2.87**	**1.33**

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Table 5: Perception Level of Networking (n=384)

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D
High (3.67-5.0)	93	24.2		
Moderate (2.34-3.66)	166	43.2	2.87	0.99
Low (1-2.33)	125	32.6		
Total	384	100.0		

Source: Field Data 2020

Table 6: Perception Score of Advocating (n=384)

Statements	Score Frequency (Percentage)					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
A local leader advocates that community members be active outside their functions, such as in other communities or the government.	91 (23.7)	93 (24.2)	88 (22.9)	51 (13.3)	61 (15.9)	2.73	1.37
A local leader is determined to unite community members.	63 (16.4)	90 (23.4)	112 (29.2)	50 (13.0)	69 (18.0)	2.93	1.37
A local leader does not allow other people to destroy the unity of community members.	82 (21.4)	71 (18.5)	81 (21.1)	68 (17.7)	82 (21.4)	2.99	1.44
A local leader supports community members in becoming innovative.	72 (18.8)	63 (16.4)	83 (21.6)	93 (24.2)	73 (19.0)	3.08	1.38
Local leaders support educational organizations.	62 (16.1)	66 (17.2)	85 (22.1)	74 (19.3)	97 (25.3)	3.20	1.40
Local leaders support reconstruction programs in the community.	63 (16.4)	72 (18.8)	87 (22.7)	66 (17.2)	96 (25.0)	3.16	1.41
Overall Mean						3.01	1.39

Source: Field Data 2020

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Table 7: Perception Level of Advocating (n=384)

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D
High (3.67-5.0)	127	33.1		
Moderate (2.34-3.66)	156	40.6	3.01	1.39
Low (1-2.33)	101	26.3		
Total	384	100.0		

Source: Field Data 2020

Table 8: Perception Score of Negotiating Supports (n=384)

Statements	Score Frequency (Percentage)					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Local leaders negotiate with sponsors to support community development projects in a timely and excellent manner.	90 (23.4)	83 (21.6)	86 (22.4)	60 (15.6)	65 (16.9)	2.81	1.39
Local leaders negotiate with government leaders to support community development programs.	85 (22.1)	103 (26.8)	93 (24.2)	52 (13.5)	51 (13.3)	2.69	1.31
The local leader negotiates directly with governmental agents to provide the necessary resources to fulfill the village's development programs.	89 (23.2)	78 (20.3)	98 (25.5)	67 (17.4)	52 (13.5)	2.78	1.34
Local leaders negotiate with community development stockholders to reach a consensus.	60 (15.6)	74 (19.3)	120 (31.3)	90 (23.4)	40 (10.4)	2.94	1.21
The local leader negotiates with other community leaders for development programs.	69 (18.0)	69 (18.0)	108 (28.1)	74 (19.3)	64 (16.7)	2.99	1.32
A local leader solves community challenges regarding water, electricity, pollutions, etc. by negotiating with the government and other community leaders.	96 (25.0)	93 (24.2)	70 (18.2)	60 (15.6)	65 (16.9)	2.75	1.42
Overall Mean						2.82	1.33

Source: Field Data 2020

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Table 9: Perception Level of Negotiating Supports (n=384)

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D
High (3.67-5.0)	85	22.1		
Moderate (2.34-3.66)	176	45.8	2.82	1.03
Low (1-2.33)	123	32.0		
Total	384	100.0		

Source: Field Data 2020

Table 10: Perception Score for Buffering (n=384)

Statements	Score Frequency (Percentage)					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
A local leader protects community members, who are rarely bothered by outside distractions.	132 (34.4)	75 (19.5)	70 (18.2)	57 (14.8)	50 (13.0)	2.53	1.42
Local leaders prevent the influence of other people, such as political, tribal, race, and religious issues, on the community.	93 (24.2)	86 (22.4)	80 (20.8)	71 (18.5)	54 (14.1)	2.76	1.37
Local leaders must consider environmental issues that may influence the community.	100 (26.0)	86 (22.4)	98 (25.5)	68 (17.7)	32 (8.3)	2.60	1.27
Local leaders must consider informing and supporting community members from natural disasters, such as drought, flood, famine, and disease.	119 (31.0)	67 (17.4)	72 (18.8)	82 (21.4)	44 (1.5)	2.65	1.40
A local leader is a trustworthy representative of the community.	91 (23.7)	86 (22.4)	77 (20.1)	68 (17.7)	62 (16.1)	2.80	1.40
Local leaders prevent people from migrating by providing small projects for production and part-time job facilities.	130 (33.9)	86 (22.4)	61 (15.9)	64 (16.7)	43 (11.2)	2.49	1.39
Overall Mean						2.63	1.37

Source: Field Data 2020

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Table 11: Perception Level of Buffering (n=384)

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D.
High (3.67-5.0)	88	22.9		
Moderate (2.34-3.66)	141	36.7	2.63	1.10
Low (1-2.33)	155	40.4		
Total	384	100.0		

Source: Field Data 2020

Table 12: Perception Score of Assessing (n=384)

Statements	Score Frequency (Percentage)					Mean	SD
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**		
The top leaders assess the local leaders.	143 (37.2)	94 (24.5)	58 (15.1)	44 (11.5)	45 (11.7)	2.36	1.38
The local leader is aware of the survey results regarding the development of the communities.	82 (21.4)	107 (27.9)	96 (25.0)	52 (13.5)	47 (12.2)	2.67	1.28
The local leader compares the level of development between communities.	110 (28.6)	99 (25.8)	79 (20.6)	63 (16.4)	33 (8.6)	2.51	1.29
The local leader assesses the overall performance of the community development programs with other communities.	108 (28.1)	89 (23.2)	90 (23.4)	57 (14.8)	40 (10.4)	2.56	1.31
Local leaders care about environmental conditions to fulfill the development programs.	100 (26.0)	85 (22.1)	86 (22.4)	63 (16.4)	50 (13.0)	2.68	1.36
Overall Mean						2.55	1.32

Source: Field Data 2020

Table 13: Perception Level of Assessing (n=384)

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D
High (3.67-5.0)	65	16.9		
Moderate (2.34-3.66)	143	37.2	2.55	1.08
Low (1-2.33)	176	45.8		
Total	384	100.0		

Source: Field Data 2020

Table 14: Perception Score of Sharing Information (n=384*)*

Statements	Score Frequency (Percentage)					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Local leaders share information regarding every development decision that occurs in other communities.	99 (25.8)	91 (23.7)	83 (21.6)	52 (13.5)	59 (15.4)	2.69	1.38
Local leaders have facilities to provide technical advice to localities on how to use farm inputs.	107 (27.9)	70 (18.2)	100 (26.0)	62 (16.1)	45 (11.7)	2.66	1.34
A local leader stays up to date on how to inform the community on where and how to get farm inputs including seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, credits, and other supplies.	103 (26.8)	83 (21.6)	69 (18.0)	59 (15.4)	70 (18.2)	2.77	1.45
A local leader allows community members to share their information with other communities for development.	103 (26.8)	92 (24.0)	74 (19.3)	62 (16.1)	53 (13.8)	2.66	1.38
Local leaders share the path of awakening political consciousness in the community.	126 (32.8)	87 (22.7)	52 (13.5)	57 (14.8)	62 (16.1)	2.59	1.47
Overall Mean						2.67	1.40

Source: Field Data 2020

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Table 15 : Perception Score of Sharing Information (n=384*)*

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D
High (3.67-5.0)	84	21.9		
Moderate (2.34-3.66)	134	34.9	2.67	1.16
Low (1-2.33)	166	43.2		
Total	384	100.0		

Source: Field Data 2020

5. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this article was to determine community members' perceptions of trans-local and cross-regional interactions and connections' roles (assessing, negotiating support, networking, buffering, advocating, and sharing information) assumed by local leaders in CDDM. Therefore, the findings of this research revealed that the trans-local and cross-regional interactions and connections roles of local leaders are at a moderate level in CDDM, which means that the local leaders make efforts toward the development of the community and have good relationships between stakeholders of rural development projects in the decision-making process. Moreover, the participation of men and women is required for development. Recently, Zhu et al. (2024) mentioned that the roles of women in families in local communities are important in increasing household income and helping men provide food and education to the children to have an educated generation in local areas in the future. local leaders need more support and advice in order to be able to provide information and skills for development and decision-making based on the community's needs to the community members. Regarding the performance and the community's perception of the trans-local and cross-regional interactions and connections' role of local leaders, the moderate level indicates that it is acceptable in such a community that has been in a war-torn country deprived of development such as Afghanistan since the start of development.

Community decision-makers for development programs have long recognized the value of stories and myths in engaging people and leading them toward development purposes (Lung-Amam and Dawkins, 2020). The results of this research show that the perception

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of local residents remains at a moderate level despite the struggles of the collapsed Afghan republic government. Therefore, the new government of Afghanistan needs to provide training through seminars, workshops, and practical learning for local leaders and community members regarding decision-making and project implementation.

6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Like any other study, this research faces several limitations. The illiteracy of community members was a challenge; some respondents needed help reading the questionnaire and needed literate family members to assist them in answering the questionnaire. Moreover, certain traditional restrictions have been placed on women in Afghan families from answering the questionnaire. In this research, family members helped the researcher collect female responses. Finally, there is a lack of information, research, and articles about local leadership in the local area of Afghanistan.

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