



A Study of distorted network

a narrative literature review analysis

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Abstract

This paper's main objective is to study the nature and operational mode of distorted network. Network studies have become popular in many fields of social science due to different emerging global and national events. Specifically, the network theory has become a key framework in understanding and studying network and collaboration. The network theory offers holistic view on structures of interpersonal and inter-group interactions. Distorted network is a contemporary challenge, which is defined as unethical, illegal and criminal networks that exist to promote defined group objectives. Old-boy network and clandestine network are the two key types of distorted networks that exist and their operational modes also differ. A narrative literature review is adopted a strategy in analyzing selected literature on the issue of distorted network. This strategy reveals that the natures and manifestations of distorted network vary from one nation or society to another. The operational boundary of old-boy network is primarily limited to a nation state, while the operational boundary of clandestine network goes beyond a nation state (often international). The latter is justified by the ability of clandestine network to have clients and members at both home and abroad. Countries with clandestine network as main challenge tend to be more corrupt and unstable, because coercion is often adopted as a method of operation. Findings from this paper also include the difficulty to make specification on what type and operational mode of distorted network that can be found in developed or developing states/societies

Keywords

Distorted Network, Old-Boy Network, Clandestine Network, and Network Theory

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1 INTRODUCTION

Many recent global events have brought the hidden unethical, illegal and criminal activities of various networks around the world into the spotlight. The revelation by a law firm (Mossack Fonseca) in Panama shows how rich, powerful, and connected individuals perpetuate different acts of hidden corruption in assets ownership by setting up secret offshore companies and accounts to hide billions of dollars, the hidden network includes political, global, and business leaders from Russia and other European countries, Africa, Americas, Asia, Australia, and Middle East. The main objective of members in these networks is to avoid taxation or commit tax fraud in their original country of residence (Mullen, 2016). According to Transparency International (2017), Cayman Islands is another money laundering destination; the tax haven has become a favorable location for various forms of hidden global networks that engage in corruption and tax evasion. This behavior deprives citizens around the world of much-needed public services while at the same time undermining institutions and democracy. Developing countries alone suffer an estimated deficit of US\$1 trillion each year to illicit financial flows. In addition, many criminal and terrorist organizations have committed unspeakable horrors against women, children and other weak people in general in many countries.

Distorted network is part of hidden corruption that can be studied from different perspectives. The dimensions and cultural/national representation (visible cases) of distorted network also vary. Distorted network are unethical, criminal and illegal networks that exist, because of different factors and objectives. Key characteristics of distorted network include protection of members, gratitude and friendship. It is of great relevance to know that actors of distorted network often do not channel and distribute their own finances or resources, but rather public resources and money within their disposal or jurisdiction. Another feature of distorted network is the partial nature of relationship, because some members of the network are more favored in comparison to others. (Salminen, Mäntysalo, 2012 & Salminen, 2013.)

The narrative literature review analysis on the study of distorted helps to create an international outlook through which distorted network is understood in different countries. It is useful to understand networks and real nature of distorted networks that exist in some key countries. The network theory provides a good framework to study the nature of networks, in order to have a deeper insight and understanding of network activities. The network theory helps to clarify in description and relevance the elements of relationship, reciprocity, influence, loyalty and other related concepts or variables. A study of distorted network can reveal answers to the questions of general features and how distorted network is tackled in society and administration.

1.1 Paper Objective, Problem and Methodology

The main objective of this paper is to examine the concept of distorted network. Due to ever increasing activities of different unethical and violent network organizations around the world in contemporary times, a review has become imperative. In this paper, analysis is premised on narrative literature review (secondary data analysis). Narrative literature review is used to study the nature and operational modes of distorted networks in different national cultures around the world (Osifo, 2015). The selection of literature is based on the literature foci/emphases and general link to distorted network as a phenomenon. The selected literature is qualitatively analysed in order to accomplish the set objective.

2 THE NETWORK THEORY

Networking and collaboration are key issues of discussion in different fields of social science. The importance of collaborative networks has become more visible in contemporary social and management studies. A considerable part of research on social networks goes with ideas, behaviors, and trends relating to interrelationships. Most parts of intra and inter organizational relationship are studied and understood through network theory. Understanding the concept of performance for example can be of numerous facets and one way to understand this in relation to coordination is that bilateral exchange is often embedded in networks. (Di Cagno, Scuibba 2010; Cassar, Rigdon 2011; Tzoumas, Amanatidis, Markakis, 2012.) According to Osifo (2013), trustworthiness and conflict are other essentials we can learn through the network theory.

Network theory offers a holistic view on structures of interpersonal and inter-group interactions. It is common to observe how structural analysts adopt unique patterns in their studies. There are the formalists whose main focus is on the form rather than the substances of a network. The formalists are of the view that uniform shapes of relationship may have uniform behavioral outcomes with exclusion of the substantive context. On the other hand, we have the structuralists, whose main focus is on the substantive questions related to both the pattern and the type of links between the nodes. Evaluating the structure of organization can take both inter and intra organizational shapes that discuss the importance and challenges of cooperation. Through network study we tend to understand that at the inter-organizational level, relationship of two or more organizations is the key objective; while the internal relationship within a particular organization is the objective at the intra-organization level. Understanding network centrality variations gives a clearer overview about the ability to coordinate, because centrality is a structural attribute of nodes in a network. The difference between formal and informal sources of influence is that informal power emanates from an actor's position in communication patterns and interaction, while formal sources are defined by position in the organizational hierarchy. (Lehtmäki, 1996; Gelfand, Beng-Chong, Raver, 2004; Hossain, Wu, 2009.)

The social network idea, which falls under the broader network theory helps to reveal the natures and modes of social exchange and interactions. According to Shaw (2009: 21 & 26), the social learning process is complementary to the social narrative process that depicts social realities amidst complexities and ineffectiveness. Social networks are often described via a critical analysis of the patterns of social networks as well as the positional and cohesive structures within networks. Social network gives a better understanding of organizational behavior. (Krackhardt, Hanson, 1993; Lehtimäki, 1996.) According Eng (2006), experts in the field of Supply Chain Management (SCM) for example, have shown that a key avenue of cost savings and improved service performance in the supply link is via increased collaboration and integration among supply chain participants.

The social exchange idea shows that the effects of networking properties on cronyism can be analyzed by identifying two types of network, which are “clique and entrepreneurial”. In addition, it is possible to discover the forms of competition, which are “inter-network and intra-network. Network competition enhances the chance of cronyism and also the effect of competition on cronyism is moderated by network. Social network idea is key to understanding cronyism, because it offers insight into accessibility of information, mutual support, cooperation, and trust. Cronyism is culture specific, because culture often creates conditions for cronyism to exist (Begley, Khatri, Tsang, 2010: 281-282; Light, 2013: 6). Network theory in general shows that understanding the responsibility and role dynamics and how they relate via intra- and inter-relationships is useful in achieving management success and societal transformation.

3 DISTORTED NETWORK AND ITS TYPES

Distorted networks are unethical, illegal, and criminal networks/groups that evolve over time and are unique to a place, group or people. Corruption in distorted network form is hidden, country-specific and culture related. The existence of the network is driven by a similar aim, which often emerges from dissatisfaction in present situation starting from politics, administration, economics, law, business and so on. Distorted network is mainly made up of two types of networks from a theoretical point of view, which are firm ties and loose ties. In firm ties, the network is small and relationships are tight while in loose ties the network is broader and relationships are poorly organized. Distorted network affects negatively the ability of public officers to effectively carry out their responsibilities to citizens, because it distorts their priorities and decision-making. (Begley, Khatri, Tsang, 2010: 281-282; Salminen, Mäntysalo 2012; Salminen, 2013: 62-63; Light, 2013: 6.) Distorted network is largely defined by exchanges that occur in forms of cronyism, nepotism, favoritism and patronage. There are four conditions that must be fulfilled for cronyism to exist: 1) no instant return of favor; 2) something tangible of value is exchanged; 3) shared network membership; and 4) at the detriment of a third party. (Begley et al., 2010: 282.) Cronyism influences different unethical practices in public services and other aspects of social life.

In Khatri, Tsang, and Begley (2006: 62), reciprocity defines transaction exchange in cronyism situation (for example, where A offers favor to B, which is premised on the common membership within a social network at the expense of party C's similar or higher claim to the valued resources). Heidenheimer's writing of 2002 on the other hand sees cronyism as embedded in networks of complex, indirect, and mutually reinforcing social exchanges between members who engage in implicit, unspecified, and reciprocal transactions with no defined time frame during which favors must be reciprocated (Begley et al., 2010: 282). According to de Graaf, Huberts (2008: 640), the true nature of corruption is understood through enduring relationships, because corruption normally occurs within enduring relationships. He further argues that the process of being corrupt can be classified as a slippery slope and the relevant motives of corruption, aside from material benefits include friendship or love, status, and the willingness to impress others. According to Della Porta, Vanuccini (2012), briber, middleman, and bribee are often the three main actors that make up a corrupt network. While some distorted networks are out to impose pains and horrors on perceived enemies, others are out to only promote the philosophy of the group. Common types of distorted networks that exist around the world are the old-boy networks and clandestine networks:

3.1 Old-boy network

Old-boy network is a type of distorted network that negatively affects a society at both the short and long run. Scholarly descriptions of old-boy network vary. Heald (1983), describes it as a network of men, who finished from the same school of higher learning (e.g. Harvard and Cambridge) and from this description the gender perspective is awoken, because women are said not to be part of this network. After past decades when women's-rights movement became popular in many parts of the world, the professional challenges (e.g. old-boy network) encountered by women still exist in modern times. The huge economic development, strong growth in personal wealth, and the emergence of the Information Age have all shaped the faces of careers around the world, but irrespective of the gains these innovations/developments have informed, the walls of discrimination that hinder women to grow to the highest levels in many field of endeavors still exist globally (Gamba, Kleiner, 2001: 101). However, the gender perspective in old-boy network explanation is strongly related to culture and society, because male are dominant in some societies and cultures while male and female are equally dominant in other societies and cultures.

Some other descriptions of old-boy network go beyond the old school mate explanation, but also friends and colleagues in other circumstances who have similar social backgrounds (e.g. politicians). According to Taylor, (2000) memberships in old-boy network are reserved for groups governed by personal contact and interaction, which is due to fact that members of old-boy networks protect one another from unqualified individuals. Progressive recruitment in old-boy network informs extra value for network members. Unravelling old-boy network and other networks helps to understand the key governance structure that could help different forms of corruption to grow in administrative and political systems from one perspective and destruction of traditional form of legitimacy, which could later lead to the legitimacy of corruption from another perspective (Choi, 2007; Paul, 2008). Members of old-boy network are part of the broader corruption networks that form a lasting relationship in order to stabilize or destabilize corruption in a social system (de Graaf, Huberts, 2008). Old-boy network is an exclusive and high stake association where protectionism and favouritism are the key principles that keep the wheels running.

3.2 Clandestine network

Clandestine network is a criminal/illicit group that often operates in secret. Clandestine network could also be referred to as informal networks that exist in many societies around the world. Networks are increasingly becoming active in modern globalized societies. International bankers, financial regulators, law enforcement officials, even legislators

cooperate informally beyond national borders in order to share information and coordinate policies. Modern days networks are not just restricted to the areas of international politics and finance, but also in the areas of arms dealership, drug trafficking, money laundering, human trafficking, terrorism, occultism/fraternizing, gambling, prostitution and many other social vices. Activities within these spheres have been enhanced by modern technologies and strategies, which help easy coordination of activities globally. The exclusion of centralized leadership in clandestine network makes decision-making difficult; especially, as it concerns complex decisions such as resource allocation and mode of operation. (University of Cambridge, 2017.) Cartel (e.g. Italian or Mexican drug cartels) is one type of clandestine network, which is a group of producers/suppliers that operates with the key aim of preserving the status quo in relation to prices and limiting the abilities of opponents/competitors to work against their selfish interests. According to Eilstrup-Sangiovanni and Jones (2008: 7) studying international organized crime and terrorism in relation to networking has become a key issue in international relations, because it is through this we can understand the consequences of the network structure and challenge the conventional wisdom about network-based threats to different countries.

A deeper examination of a clandestine network would include how networks differ from hierarchies. Researches have proven that most networked organizations are flat and decentralized in the view that decision-making and action dispersed among multiple actors who enjoy significant local autonomy and relate to one another through informal and horizontal frameworks. In comparison to hierarchies, which are characterized by top-down command, authoritative rules and legal arbitration; distorted networks are defined by self-enforcing governance structures disciplined by reputation and reciprocity. This is based on the background that networks are often premised on direct personal contacts between individuals of the same orientation, objectives and trust for on another. The informal and flexible designs of clandestine networks make them better than hierarchies in relation to learning, innovating and adapting to new challenges and environment. (University of Cambridge, 2017; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, Jones 2008.) Communication is important for clandestine network to exist and flourish and it is for this reason that researchers with interests in understanding the workings of clandestine network try to examine the internal communications of underground cells of individuals who network in order to accomplish defined objectives of a group (McCormik, Owen, 2000: 175).

4 A NARRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW ANALYSIS ON DISTORTED NETWORK

Distorted network varies in nature and mode of operation from one country to another. According to Sun, (2004: 1-2) the Chinese type of distorted network for example, allows top wealthy officials, businessmen, bookies, and gangsters to use vast amount of money, which originally is not theirs to gamble in notable casinos centers around the world; this represents one part of China's huge corruption and its record-breaking economic success. A large number of the culprits are government officials who have stolen public funds and taken large amount of bribes via smuggling, tax evasion, or other notorious activities. Table 1 below gives an overview of the most common type of distorted network and mode of operation in some selected countries around the world.

Table 1. A Country Specific of Distorted Network

Country	Source	Main Distorted Network Type	Mode of Operation
Britain	T. Heald: <i>Networks: Who We Know and How We Use Them</i> . London: Hodder and Stoughton (1983).	Old-boy network	Vertical and horizontal networks of members who graduated from prestigious British schools. The mode of old-boy networking is premised on helping fellow graduates to enter top positions and offices in the society.
United States	Sarah Rand & Laura Bierema: <i>Exploring the Nature of the "Old Boy's Network" in the United States: Using Electronic Networks of Practice to Understand Gendered Issues in HRD</i> . England: Meeting of the University Forum for Human Resource Development (2009).	Old-boy network	Membership attainment is by being a white male and white collar. Women and people of color are highly restricted to becoming members; which thereby, make their career prospects less achievable. Members of this network use their competition and other advantages attained through formal structure to promote friendship and collaborations within the informal system.
Japan	Ulrike Schaeede: <i>The "Old Boy" Network and Government-Business Relationship in Japan</i> . The Journal of Japanese Studies (1985)	Old-boy network	Networks made of retired government officials who "descend from heaven" (amakudari) into the boardrooms of private organizations after retirement from the public service and using their previous experiences and connections from the public service to promote personal and fellow members interests.

Nigeria	Osakponmwun Daniel Edevbaro: <i>The Political Economy of Corruption and Underdevelopment in Nigeria</i> . Helsinki: Helsingin Yliopistopaino (1998).	Old-boy network	Serving and former military generals who finished from the same military college and use their influences and connections in the armed forces to influence political positions at different levels in order to loot the treasury and perpetuate other forms of corruption.
Colombia	David Gagne: <i>The Evolution of Criminal Influence in Colombia's Local Elections</i> . Insight Crime (2015).	Clandestine network	Criminal and armed groups that recruit members based on orientation of violence and extortion. Money made from criminal activities (drug and sex trafficking for example) are used to promote the political interests of members or any affiliate political party.
Russia	Masha Gessen: <i>The Myth of the Russian Oligarchs</i> . The New York Times (2014).	Old-boy Network	Small group of men (Oligarchs) who took advantage of the Russian privatization process in preceding decade to become very wealthy. The Russian Oligarchs were instrumental in picking politicians who occupied different political positions after the fall of communist government in 1991 in Russia; but have recently been forced by the present Russian leader (Vladimir Putin) to surrender all of their political power and some of their riches in exchange for safety, security and continued prosperity.
Australia and New Zealand	Shelagh Mooney: <i>The Demise of the "Good Old Boy Network" in Australia and New Zealand Hotel: Facts or Fiction</i> . The CAUTHE Conference (2008).	Old-boy Network	A group of men who finished from same schools of higher learning that uses their influences and positions to promote the benefits of their members in retaining and gaining top positions in different professional areas in Australia and New Zealand. Members of this network often impede women in getting into top positions in organizations, because of their inability to compete equally.
Afghanistan	Abdulhadi Hairan: <i>The Profile of the Taliban's Propaganda Tactics</i> : Huffingtonpost (2017).	Clandestine Network	Members of secret societies such as Talibans, Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Hezbollah, Haqqani Network and many others that operate in Afghanistan and other countries like Pakistan, Syria, and Iraq. Members of these networks primarily take advantage of religious, ethnic and anti-modernization sentiments and propagandas to justify their objectives in politics, business, economy, and social life. In the ideologies of these groups, women are seen to be exploited or relegated; while non-believers (infidels) are either seen to be killed or enslaved.

It is obvious from table 1 above that different countries have their unique type of distorted network as a key ethical, legal, humanitarian and security challenge. Unlike old-boy network whose operational boundaries are nationally limited, clandestine network operational boundaries are beyond national borders, because they normally have clients and members both at home and abroad. Countries with clandestine network dominance tend to be more corrupt and unstable at the same time, because coercion is often adopted as a method of operation. Clandestine or old-boy network could be dominant in the countries studied in table 1 above depending on evidence or chosen dimension. In the study of distorted in this paper, it is difficult to make specifications or generalization on what type that can be found in Developed or Developing states/societies.

Tackling or addressing distorted network requires different perspectives and paradigms, because of their different natures and operational modes. In addition, the general problems associated with distorted network are often regarded or related to wicked problems, because they are difficult to tame or control. However, Gamba, Kleiner, (2001: 104) have proposed the following as ways to tackle the old-boy network nature of distorted network: 1) Networking, networking and networking; 2) Mentoring, hiring and promoting women and other minorities; 3) Demonstrating superior performance; and 4) Developing skills and communication techniques more traditionally associated with men. From the perspectives of McCormik, Owen (2000: 175) any model that must address clandestine network nature of distorted network should be designed to highlight the tradeoff between operational capacity and operational security of clandestine groups. In addition, the model must help to understand how money/resources are made and distributed. To tackle clandestine network, efforts must also be made to target middle-men at the primary centers of emergence and convergence.

5 CONCLUSION

Emphasis in this paper has been to study the concept of distorted network. Distorted network was defined as unethical, illegal and criminal networks that exist to promote defined objectives of a particular group. Old-boy network and clandestine network are the two main types of distorted networks, which operational modes are also in a unique form. A narrative literature analysis reveals that the natures and manifestations of distorted network differ from one country to another. The operational boundaries of old-boy network are mainly restricted to a particular nation state. For clandestine network the operational boundaries are broad, because they are mainly international; this is due to the abilities to have clients and members at both home and abroad. Countries with clandestine network as key challenge tend to be more corrupt and unstable at the same time, because coercion is often adopted as a method of operation. Finally, solution to distorted network must include among other things a careful study of every activity from the center of emergence to convergence.

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