

Public Abstract

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Title:THE ROLE OF BRIDGING AND LINKING SOCIAL CAPITAL IN HOUSEHOLD WEALTH: A CASE STUDY OF TWO LIVELIHOODS IN TREASURE BEACH, JAMAICA

The Caribbean is a developing region of the world that has struggled to overcome corrupt governmental programs and agencies. Poverty and crime are commonplace, and a strong distrust of government is often present. With that said, this research undertook a comparative case study by surveying twenty fishers and twenty farmers in a unique Jamaican community. Research analyzed the role of bridging and linking social capital (social networks and personal relationships) in contributing to different levels of household wealth.

This research found that the use of social capital varies by occupation. Key findings include positive relationships between organizational membership and group diversity (variety of groups) and wealth creation for fishers and a negative relationship for farmers. Research found that informal networks (personal relationships) play an important role in both occupations. Roles include reduced vulnerability (caused by hurricanes and droughts) of poorer fishers and farmers as well as providing access to money, seeds, equipment, and information, which helps households be more productive. As a result, developers and policymakers need to capitalize on network preferences (types of relationships) instead of ignoring them. If this is done, then future programs will be able to more effectively distribute the necessary resources (seeds, information, and equipment) to the poorest and most vulnerable in Jamaica and in the Caribbean, thus reducing poverty levels.