

Study on Contribution to Solving Loneliness and Isolation among Young People Through Activation of Festival in Urban Regeneration Areas in Korea

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Abstract. In Korea, as the problem of loneliness and isolation among the youth has arisen, there is a demand to understand the current situation and suggest solutions. Meanwhile, amidst low economic growth and population decline, urban regeneration utilizing streets and communities is being promoted instead of the existing redevelopment-centered urban development, and new local festivals are being held as part of this. It is also expected that hosting local festivals will contribute to solving the problem of loneliness and isolation among the youth. Accordingly, this study set a hypothesis that the activation of festivals in urban regeneration areas will contribute to solving the problem of loneliness and isolation among college students, and sought to derive the possibility and future solutions. As a result of the analysis, the hypothesis was accepted, and it was found that local festivals are expected to prevent loneliness rather than alleviate loneliness. In addition, the need to consider the loneliness of people living in two or more households in the same area after graduating from middle/high school was highlighted. From this perspective, the need for online promotion, including the expansion of public transportation accessibility to urban regeneration areas, was raised.

Keywords: Urban regeneration, Festival, Youth, Loneliness, Isolation.

1 Introduction

Due to changes in social structures such as the increase in single-person households, diversification of labor types, and spread of the Internet, human solidarity in families, regions, and companies is becoming weaker, and anyone can fall into loneliness and isolation. Problems of loneliness and isolation, such as the problem of reclusive loners and deaths from loneliness, are becoming more evident. In response, a society that does not exclude people suffering from loneliness and isolation and a society where people can help each other and feel human solidarity are being called for [1]. In Korea, since the enactment of the Urban Regeneration Act in 2013, urban regeneration projects have been carried out across the country, and resident organizations

such as village management social cooperatives are promoting street reorganization and community activities.

For example, the population of Uncheon Sinbong-dong, Cheongju-city decreased by 18.2% from 21,999 in 2012 to 17,987 in 2018. Accordingly, a car-free street creation project was carried out through an urban regeneration project, and activities to create a youth cultural street were carried out. In addition, a cultural school program is being operated to conduct education, promotional marketing, and consulting for youth, the elderly, and small business owners. Startup support, management consulting, and marketing education for small business owners are being provided, showing the effect of strengthening the competitiveness of small business owners. In the meantime, local festivals are being revitalized to attract young people. The goal is to promote local culture through festivals and provide various programs in which young people can participate to promote local revitalization. In Uncheon Sinbong-dong, a local festival was held in 2023 with the Professional Organization Council, and approximately 1,500 citizens participated. The role of the youth, such as collaboration with university clubs, is also expected. In the Uncheon Sinbong-dong urban regeneration area, the village management social cooperative and university student club have signed an agreement to build a network between the university and the local community and to build a local community of sustainable, mutual growth and sharing. It is expected that such trends in urban regeneration and festivals will also contribute to solving the problems of loneliness and isolation among young people.

However, existing prior studies have been conducted separately from studies on urban regeneration activation and youth loneliness and isolation issues, and there is no research bridging the two. Therefore, this study set a hypothesis that festival activation in urban regeneration areas contributes to solving young people loneliness and isolation issues, and sought to derive the possibility and future solutions.

2 Review of Previous Studies

2.1 Loneliness and Isolation

Solitude and isolation are defined as separate concepts. First, present three requirements for loneliness: 'it is caused by the lack of social relationships in people', 'it is a subjective experience', and 'it involves pain' [2]. On the other hand, there is also a positive view that loneliness has the potential to develop humanity [3] and a self-growth function [4]. The most commonly used scale for measuring loneliness is the 'University of California, Los Angeles Loneliness Scale (UCLA Loneliness Scale)', which measures loneliness as a single factor structure and dissatisfaction with the frequency and quality of human relationships. Next, isolation refers to an objective lack of social connection. However, since social isolation is understood from various aspects, there are various scales for measuring social isolation [5].

Both isolation and loneliness have in common that they are related to a state of low social connection, but there is a difference in that isolation is an objective state and loneliness is a subjective state. Some people feel lonely even when they are not actually isolated, while others do not feel lonely even when they are isolated [6].

One thing to note is the distinction between online and offline. SNS can help you find social connections. However, there is also a study that shows that excessive SNS use increases the rate of feeling lonely by about 20% compared to non-existent cases [7].

In face-to-face communication, the brain receives various stimulations by actually meeting people, and the brain is activated. On the other hand, only a part of the brain is activated in online communication. In addition, when good communication is achieved by seeing each other's faces in person, a phenomenon occurs in which brain activity is synchronized between the two. However, there are experimental results showing that the brain is not synchronized online. This means that information is transmitted online, but there is not as much empathy as in person [8].

While paying attention to the characteristics and reality of loneliness and isolation both online and offline, a society is being requested where people can easily seek help and speak up naturally even when they are lonely or isolated. To this end, since the existing welfare system alone cannot encompass such a wide range, the need to form regional exchange hubs and promote regional events in advance is being raised [9]. In other words, the importance of regional festivals as a space and time where anyone can come and go naturally is being re-recognized.

2.2 Urban Regeneration and Festivals

The existing urban regeneration, which focused on visible results, focused on physical environmental management and redevelopment, raising questions about the sustainability of the city. Now, as the humanistic aspects of urban regeneration, such as the history and identity inherent in the city center and the meaning of buildings, are emphasized, the importance of urban regeneration and regional development through culture is receiving attention.

In Korea, the Urban Regeneration Act was enacted in 2013. The background is the intention to economically, socially, physically, and environmentally revitalize declining cities due to population decline, changes in industrial structure, indiscriminate urban expansion, and aging residential environments by strengthening regional capacity, introducing and creating new functions, and utilizing regional resources. In particular, the presence of the youth is considered important due to the aging process and population decline.

In urban regeneration areas, various projects are being carried out with village management social cooperatives as the main players. In the urban regeneration project of Uncheon and Sinbong-dong, Cheongju-city, the Gorumul Cooperative is focusing on attracting tourists, revitalizing local businesses, and creating social value by focusing on three contents: 'creating shared values', 'respecting life', and 'sharing knowledge and information'. Festivals are being utilized as an urban regeneration strategy to revitalize declining cities.

In addition to the process of preparing for a festival, where community members help each other and solidarity is formed [10], there is also a study that suggests disaster prevention as a potential function of festivals.

A previous study on the relationship between urban regeneration and festivals includes a study on the effect of festivals on revitalizing urban regeneration [11]. Tourism effects can be divided into economic, social, cultural, and environmental effects, and each effect can be analyzed [12].

There is also a study on the content that festivals aim for. The trend of modern leisure culture is rapidly spreading the value concept of edutainment, which contains both enjoyment and education, so it is a strategic proposal for festivals to include historical, cultural, deviant, and educational elements that correspond to the characteristics of festivals [13]. Meanwhile, it is difficult to find previous studies on festivals and loneliness and isolation. However, since the activation of festival participation including youth and the problems of youth isolation and loneliness can be seen as related problems, this study set up a hypothesis that the activation of festivals in regeneration areas mainly contributes to solving the problems of university student's loneliness and isolation, and attempted to derive the possibility and future solutions.

3 Results of survey analysis

3.1 Analysis Method

The survey was distributed online from August 28 to 30, 2024 targeting current college students, and responses were received from 49 people. The survey was written based on FGI, and the content was largely composed of three parts: 1) five surveys on activating participation in urban regeneration area festivals, 2) five surveys on isolation and loneliness of the youth, and 3) four demographic surveys and one free response.

In order to evaluate the reliability of the survey, the Cronbach's alpha value, which measures the internal consistency between the items that make up the scale, was calculated. In addition, frequency analysis, cross-tabulation, and correlation analysis were performed, and the free response content was interpreted.

3.2 Analysis Results

The Cronbach's alpha value for the questions used as scales or measurement items was calculated to be 0.911. Generally, a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 or higher is considered reliable, so this survey can be interpreted as having high reliability.

From the cross-tabulation and correlation analysis sample, the gender (other) was excluded. The reason for exclusion is that there is only one response, and if it is included in the correlation analysis, the results will be significantly different than if it is not included. This respondent has no intention of participating in local festivals, thinks that it is not helpful at all, and is always in a state of loneliness and isolation, but he responded that he never feels isolated online. In cases like this, it is considered desirable to have a separate study. Among the results of cross-tabulation and correlation analysis, **Table 1** showed that there was a correlation between whether hosting local festivals contributed to resolving youth loneliness and isolation and the degree of feeling isolated (P-value: 0.05 or less).

Among those who responded that they rarely felt isolated, there were 11 respondents who said that hosting festivals contributed to resolving youth loneliness and isolation to a moderate degree, and 9 respondents who said that it helped to some extent. This is interpreted to mean that hosting local festivals prevents loneliness rather than helping those who already feel lonely. In the free-form response section, one respondent said, "It seems that it is difficult for isolated people to even open the door to their room and come out, so it seems difficult for them to

participate in local festivals." People who are already in lonely or isolated situations need specialized support.

Table 1. Whether hosting local festivals contributes to resolving youth loneliness and isolation and the degree to which they feel isolated

Division		How much do you feel isolated?		
		Occasionally	Almost none	None at all
Festival	Not very helpful	5	2	2
	commonly	3	11	1
	Very helpful	1	0	2
	Helps somewhat	6	9	4
	Not helpful at all	2	0	0

Chi-squared test statistic: 15.6747; P-value: 0.0473

Meanwhile, the combinations in which the correlation analysis Cramer's V value is 0.3 or higher include the following Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4.

Table 2. Existence of inmate and degree of loneliness felt

Division		How lonely you feel		
		Occasionally	Almost none	None at all
Inmate	None	6	5	2
	Existence	15	17	3

Cramer's V = 0.403

Table 2, in terms of whether there is inmate and the degree of loneliness felt, 17 people said that they almost never feel lonely when they have inmate, and 15 people said that they sometimes do. The number of respondents who said that they sometimes feel lonely even when they have a inmate is similar to the number of respondents who said that they almost never feel lonely. This part will be examined later along with the contents related to isolation in Table 4.

Table 3. Whether the area of residence during middle/high school is the same as the area of residence currently and the degree of loneliness felt

Division	How lonely you feel		
	Occasionally	Almost none	None at all

Middle/high school years Area of residence	Current residence Same area	13	12	4
	Current residence Different area	8	10	1

Cramer's V = 0.331

Table 3, In terms of whether the area of residence during middle/high school is the same as the current area of residence and the degree of loneliness felt, the largest number of respondents (13) said that they sometimes feel lonely even though their current area of residence is the same. Rather, the result that people sometimes feel lonely when their area of residence is the same rather than when it changes requires separate consideration. If those who remain feel lonely because the people around them have left, the importance of festivals that reaffirm regional identity and exchange ideas can be highlighted from that perspective as well.

Table 4. Existence of inmate and degree of isolation felt

Division		How much do you feel isolated?		
		Occasionally	Almost none	None at all
Inmate	None	5	6	2
	Existence	7	25	3

Cramer's V = 0.403

Table 4, among those with a cohabitant and the degree of isolation, those who rarely felt isolated had the highest number of 25 people. In the case of single-person households, there was no significant difference between those who rarely felt isolated (6 people) and those who sometimes felt isolated (5 people).

Meanwhile, compared to the response results related to loneliness in **Table 1** above, the following differences were found. That is, in cases where there is inmate, there is no or almost no feeling of isolation (28 people), but there is a feeling of loneliness sometimes (15 people). This is a significant difference compared to single-person households, where the feelings of loneliness and isolation are almost the same. In other words, there are a certain number of people who feel lonely even when living with family or in a dormitory. In addition, considering the situation where people who live in the same residential area feel lonely, as confirmed in **Table 2**, the need to consider the loneliness of people who live in two or more in the same area is highlighted. From this perspective, we can gain insight into what kind of feelings the urban regeneration area festival should focus on among local residents.

Table 5. Reasons for difficulty in participating in local festivals (multiple responses)

Division	Frequency	ratio
I don't have time	27	55.1%
Because the distance is far	16	32.7%
Because it's a financial burden	4	8.2%
Because I don't know the information	27	55.1%
I don't have anyone to go with	6	12.2%
Etc.	6	12.2%

Table 5, the most common reasons for not participating in local festivals (multiple responses) were 'I don't have time' and 'I don't know the information' at 55.1% and 'It's too far' at 32.7%. Other opinions included 'The festival is not fun', 'There are too many people', 'It's sparse', 'The theme is not fun', 'It's bothersome', and 'The events are usually similar'. The need to consider providing time and information for young people to participate in festivals and the need to organize festivals that are tailored to the interests of young people are being considered.

Table 6. What helps promote participation in local festivals (multiple responses)

Division	Frequency	ratio
Held at various times including weekends/weekdays/nights	28	57.1%
Public transportation connection information	21	42.9%
Various coupons provided	18	36.7%
Offline promotion such as banners	12	24.5%
Online promotion such as homepage and SNS	29	59.2%
Activate clubs and groups	6	12.2%
Etc.	1	2%

Table 6, in response to the question of what helps promote participation in local festivals (multiple responses), 'online promotion such as homepage and SNS' was the most common at 59.2%, followed by 'holding at various times such as weekends/weekdays/nights' at 57.1%, and 'provision of public transportation connections' at 42.9%. Other opinions included the following: 'For the general MZ generation, local festivals are one of the things to enjoy, and if there are many things to enjoy in the nearby commercial area (ex. cafes, restaurants), it seems like they feel like stopping by while they are there, so selecting a geographical commercial area

is the most important factor.’ From these responses, the need for online promotion, including accessibility to public transportation, for urban regeneration areas where cafes, restaurants, etc. are located is derived.

Table 7 Frequency of feeling isolated online/offline

Division	None at all	Almost none	Occasionally	Always	(Total)
Online	30.6%	44.9%	22.4%	2.1%	100.0%
Offline	22.4%	49.0%	26.5%	2.1%	100.0%
Online-Offline	8.2%	-4.1%	-4.1%	0% *	0%

P-value: 0.009

* The respondent who answered ‘always’ (1 person) was a different respondent online and offline.

Finally, the responses to the frequency of feeling isolated online and offline are compared as shown in **Table 7** below. The results of the chi-square test to check the difference in responses to the two questions showed a significant difference between the responses of online isolation and offline isolation ($p=0.009$). In other words, the experiences of isolation online and offline are related, suggesting that people who feel isolated online are more likely to feel isolated offline. Looking at the details, the response that they do not feel isolated at all was 8.2% higher online than offline. On the other hand, the response that they rarely or sometimes feel isolated was 4.1% higher offline than online. This indicates a correlation that even if they do not feel isolated online, they feel isolated to some extent offline. In other words, it is interpreted that measures to reduce the feeling of isolation are needed when connecting from online to offline.

4 Conclusions and Discussions

This study hypothesized that festival activation in urban regeneration areas mainly contributes to solving the problems of loneliness and isolation among college students, and conducted a survey to derive the possibility and future solutions. The survey consisted of three major items: 1) five questions on the activation of festival participation in urban regeneration areas, 2) five questions on the loneliness and isolation of young people, and 3) four demographic questions and one free response. A total of 49 people responded. The results of frequency analysis, cross-analysis, and correlation analysis are summarized as follows.

First, the hypothesis that festival activation in urban regeneration areas mainly contributes to solving the problems of loneliness and isolation among college students was adopted. However, the tendency to respond that festivals help solve the problems of loneliness and isolation is more common among young people who do not feel lonely than among young people who do feel lonely. In other words, it is interpreted that local festivals are expected to prevent loneliness rather than alleviate loneliness. Meanwhile, it was derived that there is a need to find solutions other than festivals for those who already feel lonely.

Next, there is the correlation between the presence of a cohabitant and loneliness and isolation, and the correlation between the degree of loneliness felt and whether the area of residence during middle/high school and the current area of residence are the same. In this regard, it was analyzed that respondents who had a cohabitant or lived in the same area as middle/high school felt loneliness more than respondents who did not. This could be interpreted as the loneliness of continuing to live in the same area compared to people leaving the area or the thinning of human relationships. From this perspective, we can gain implications on what kind of feelings the urban regeneration area festival should focus on for local residents.

Finally, the results of the frequency analysis on the difficulty of participating in local festivals showed that there were many responses such as 'I don't have time', 'I don't know the information', and 'It's too far away'. It is interpreted that small and medium-sized festivals held near the residential area, such as in urban regeneration areas, are easier to participate in than large-scale festivals held far away. In addition, the results of the frequency analysis on the promotion of participation in local festivals showed that there were many responses such as 'online promotion through homepages and SNS', 'holding at various times such as weekends/weekdays/nights', and 'information on public transportation connection'. Here, it is interpreted that there is a need for online promotion including public transportation accessibility to urban regeneration areas. In addition, based on the analysis results showing that respondents who do not feel isolated at all online feel somewhat isolated offline, it is interpreted that consideration should be given to preventing offline isolation when promoting online.

Meanwhile, as a limitation of this study, the number of respondents was limited to 49, and the characteristics of the respondents were limited to college students, so it is necessary to expand the survey subjects to include more age groups in the future. The results of this study are significant as basic data for analyzing the background of youth participation in urban regeneration area festivals and their orientations from the perspective of loneliness and isolation.

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