

# A Study on the Social Welfare Service Delivery System in South Korean Island Areas

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## Abstract

In this study, the researcher analyzed the social welfare service delivery system in South Korean island areas. A qualitative study method was used to explore the structure, practices, and processes of the island areas' social welfare service delivery system. The study participants were six individuals, including social workers and public officials, engaged in Shinan County's social welfare service delivery system. Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth individual interviews, which were conducted over approximately two months, from February to March 2025. Each interview lasted between one and two hours. Efforts were made to ensure the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study findings, based on which the following recommendations are presented. Due to the characteristics of Shinan County, which is isolated from the rest of the country by sea, there are difficulties in distributing social welfare facilities and providing specialized services. To address these difficulties, base facilities should be established in different locations, mobile specialized services should be introduced, public-private cooperation should be strengthened, an integrated database should be constructed, and new volunteer services mainly provided by young and middle-aged adults should be activated.

## Keywords

Social Welfare Service Delivery System    Island Areas    Qualitative Analysis    Public-Private Cooperation

Integrated Database    Mobile Welfare Services

## 1. Introduction

South Korean society is facing problems due to an aging population and low birth rates, and the consequent regional population imbalance seriously affects society overall. In particular, in island areas characterized by geographical isolation and accessibility limitations, the declining and aging population is leading to a greater demand for social welfare services (Choi, 2021; Kim, Choi & Oh, 2014).

However, the current social welfare service delivery system cannot adequately deal with these changes in island areas. Island residents face a lack of social welfare services and limited access to both social welfare services and overall resources, such as transportation and health care. Furthermore, administrative support is sparse, thereby reducing local residents' quality of life (Mokpo National University Institute of Island Culture, 2023).

South Korea's social welfare service delivery system is highly centralized and managed by the government. Although this structure has ensured the consistency of social welfare policies nationwide, it often fails to account for regional demands and specificities. Central government planning and execution have weakened the autonomy and response capabilities of local governments, making it difficult for them to meet the practical needs of local residents (Nam & Jeon, 2012; Heu, 2018). In particular, the duplication and inefficiency of social welfare service provision processes increase social costs while preventing appropriate resources from being delivered to residents who need help (Ki, 2020).

Scholars investigating the social welfare service delivery system have discussed the characteristics of and directions for improving the system from various perspectives. Kim (2010), Heu (2018) & Kim (2021) analyzed the structural characteristics and issues of the social welfare service delivery system and identified a need for decentralized governance, supplier competition, and enhanced user choice. Furthermore, Kim & Ryu (2006), Lee, Choi, Yang, Park, Jin & Xu (2013), Lee, Kim & Park (2008), Park, Choi & Cho (2012) analyzed the social welfare environment, resources, and needs of islands and rural areas, and emphasized the need for delivery system adjustments that reflect regional specificities.

In addition, Sim (2010), Nam & Jeon (2012), Lee (2001), Kim, Choi & Oh (2014), Park & Min (2008) pointed out the segmentation and inefficiency of the current social welfare service delivery system and proposed a community-centered, integrated approach, to address the need for rural service delivery. Along with the aforementioned researchers, Lee & Lee (2012) argued that the integration and efficiency of the delivery system should be enhanced through interagency linkages, with community welfare centers functioning as lead agencies.

From a legal perspective, Ha (2022) analyzed the role and function of the private social welfare delivery system based on the Social Welfare Services Act, and proposed legal measures to supplement and strengthen the expertise of private organizations. Thus, previous researchers have multilaterally illuminated the structure and problems of South Korea's social welfare service delivery system and directions for improving it.

Although existing studies have contributed to broadening our understanding of the overall South Korean social welfare service delivery system, they have several limitations. First, studies focusing specifically on island regions are rare. Although many researchers have considered rural areas, they have failed to sufficiently consider the unique characteristics of island areas, such as transportation limitations and difficulties in recruiting social workers. Second, in-depth analyses based on qualitative approaches are lacking. Few qualitative studies have captured the experiences of social workers and public officials, and most studies have focused on quantitative surveys or policy analyses.

Therefore, there is a need for in-depth analyses of the social welfare service delivery system in island areas. In particular, since island areas have distinct characteristics, such as living environments that differ from those of land areas, constraints on transportation and communication, and small population groups, it is difficult for the existing uniform social welfare service delivery system to satisfy the diverse needs of local residents. For island area residents, due to constraints on economic and social resources and a relatively heavy dependence on social welfare services, there is an urgent need to enhance the timeliness, accessibility, and sustainability of those services. Therefore, establishing a specialized social welfare service delivery system specialized for island areas goes beyond mere institutional efficiency; it is a core task that

must be undertaken to guarantee the basic quality of life of local residents and ensure the sustainability of local communities (Choi, 2021; Mokpo National University Institute of Island Culture, 2023).

Based on critical analysis, this study aimed to qualitatively analyze the social welfare service delivery system in island areas using the case of Shinan County. In-depth interviews were conducted with social workers and social welfare officials in Shinan County regarding their experiences with the social welfare service delivery process, its limitations, and opportunities for institutional improvements. The intention was to recommend a social welfare service delivery system for island areas that would reflect their unique characteristics.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. The Korean Social Welfare Service Delivery System

The social welfare service delivery system is an organizational structure that functions as an implementation path for realizing social welfare policies on the ground. Beyond simple connections between service providers, it plays a pivotal role in ensuring the practical effectiveness of policies and respect for citizens' welfare rights. The system comprises a complex network of diverse players, ranging from the central government to local governments and private social welfare organizations (Lee, 2001). By determining the accessibility and efficiency of social welfare services through organic connections between service providers and users, the delivery system acts as a core mechanism for social welfare administration (Gilbert & Terrell, 2007).

Article 34 of the South Korean Constitution guarantees people's right to human dignity and stipulates the state's obligation to promote social security and social welfare in order to realize the foregoing. The Social Welfare Services Act, enacted to enshrine these principles, demands the establishment of a community welfare system to guarantee the rights of those who need social welfare. This means that the delivery system is both a constitutional mechanism and a legal foundation for recognizing people's welfare rights (Ha, 2022).

South Korea's social welfare service delivery system is largely based on public-private sector cooperation. Local governments provide services directly to residents or indirectly by financially supporting social welfare organizations or senior citizen centers. For example, in the case of senior citizen welfare services, the central government issues general policies, but metropolitan and primary local governments share responsibility for their implementation and operation (Park, Choi & Cho, 2012).

The private sector also operates various social welfare facilities for children, the elderly, and people with physical or mental disabilities. These facilities are divided into living facilities and utility facilities, and they provide either boarding or ambulatory services according to the needs of the beneficiaries. However, social welfare services in South Korea depend heavily on private corporations and facilities, most of which are commissioned by the government and operated with public funds. This limits the autonomy and flexibility of the private sector, reinforcing the tendency for their public operations to be subject to state supervision and control (Ha, 2022). This structure hinders the effective utilization of private -sector expertise and resources accumulated over long periods and, thus, the autonomous development of community welfare.

The social welfare service delivery system has diverse aspects that differ according to the service operator, administrative structure, and service type. First, in terms of the structural and functional aspects, it is divided into an administrative system, which is responsible for establishing policy, and an implementation system, which is responsible for the implementation process. Second, in terms of the operational aspect, public organizations run by the Ministry of Health and Welfare coexist

and collaborate with private organizations, such as social welfare corporations, facilities, and welfare councils. Third, regarding the service type aspect, specialized delivery systems are organized by specialism, such as child welfare, elderly welfare, mental health, and national basic livelihood security (Kim, 2005).

In addition, the social welfare service delivery system is closely connected to the social welfare administration, which is the process of practicing to transform abstract policies into concrete services and deliver them to users. The delivery system is the structural foundation for realizing this process. Therefore, understanding the social welfare service delivery system is essential for grasping the core components of social welfare administration (Copeland & Wexler, 1995; Kim, 2005).

In summary, the social welfare service delivery system is a national welfare practice mechanism based on the Constitution and relevant laws, and it comprises various stakeholders participating who participate, collaborate, and share roles. However, as previously mentioned, a structure based on delegation to the private sector tends to stifle autonomy and creativity. Therefore, to enhance the effectiveness of the delivery system, improvements are needed to achieve a balance between government control and autonomy. Ultimately, systematic understanding and continuous maintenance of the delivery system are crucial for the successful implementation of welfare policies and the qualitative improvement of community welfare.

## 2.2 The Social Welfare Service Delivery System in Island Areas

Island areas are characterized by geographical isolation, and their environmental uniqueness clearly distinguishes them from land areas. However, the current social welfare service delivery system fails to adequately reflect the island areas' distinct regional characteristics, which cause various structural problems and limitations.

The most fundamental problems for social welfare service delivery systems in island areas are physical distances and mobility discontinuities. Islands are geographically separated by the sea, which significantly constrains residents' movements. Public transportation tends to be extremely limited, and the physical distances between people's residences and social welfare facilities hinder access to services. These mobility constraints not only result in inconveniences in daily life, but also weaken residents' will and opportunity to use various social welfare services (Lee, Choi, Yang, Park, Jin & Xu, 2013; Madubun, 2024).

Furthermore, the problems of a declining population and super-aging are placing further pressure on the island areas' social welfare system. The continuing exodus of young people has led to a rapidly aging demographic in island areas, increasing the demand for social welfare services. However, the human resources and financial foundations to support this demand remain severely limited (Park, Choi & Cho, 2012; Lee, Choi & Han, 2015). As the imbalance between the demand and supply of social welfare services has become more pronounced, island area residents have increasingly faced adverse situations that limit their timely access to necessary services (Prasad, 2008; LeMonde, 2023; Kim & Ryu, 2006).

The severe shortage of social welfare facilities, workers, and financial resources is also recognized as a structural problem influencing social welfare service delivery to island areas. In these areas, social welfare facilities are extremely limited and are likely to be concentrated in central locations, making it difficult for residents living on the outskirts to use services. Furthermore, attracting and retaining professional social welfare workers is extremely difficult, and operational budgets are far from sufficient. In addition, social welfare organizations in island areas are generally evaluated using the same standards as those applied to urban areas, which inevitably disadvantage them and threaten the sustainability of facility operations in island areas (Choi, 2021; Mokpo National University Institute of Island Culture, 2023).

The lack of interagency linkages and the private-public mix is also a serious problem for the social welfare service delivery system in island areas. In many cases, cooperative networks between public and private institutions have not been properly established, which means that social welfare services are interrupted or provided inefficiently. A performance-oriented administrative system, an imbalance of power between agencies, and a lack of awareness of the importance of linkages are the root causes of the problems. Therefore, revitalized community welfare councils and the establishment of resident-led welfare networks are desperately needed (Kim & Ryu, 2006).

The self-reliance of social welfare organizations in island areas is also a factor that must be considered. In island areas, due to their poor industrial bases and financial conditions, it is difficult to establish or operate independent welfare facilities, which makes the provision of social welfare services virtually impossible without continued support from the central government. Therefore, there is a need to proactively maximize local human and material resources and reorganize the welfare system based on residents' participation (Lee & Lee, 2012; Lee, Choi, Yang, Park, Jin & Xu, 2013).

Applying existing urban-style welfare delivery systems and ignoring the unique characteristics of island areas may exacerbate local welfare problems. Therefore, a customized welfare delivery system that considers the island areas' unique characteristics, such as isolation, small size, and low population density, must be established. This is an essential task in improving accessibility to and eliminating blind spots in welfare services (Lee, Kim & Park, 2008).

In addition, the gap in perceptions between local residents and administrative agencies regarding the accessibility of social welfare services has been highlighted as a problem. Although island area residents perceive the difficulty of accessing social welfare services in their daily lives, administrative agencies tend to underestimate this difficulty. To narrow this perception gap, it is necessary to eliminate barriers to access, such as distance and information or procedural deficiencies, and to establish welfare policies that reflect residents' perceptions (Sim, 2010).

In summary, the social welfare service delivery system in island areas faces complex problems, such as distance, isolation, intensifying aging, a lack of welfare resources, mobility issues, a lack of interagency linkages, and an inappropriate urban evaluation model. To overcome these problems, an independent welfare delivery system must be established based on the unique characteristics of island areas and the revitalization of resident-centered welfare networks.

## 3. Study Method

### 3.1 Study Model

In this study, a qualitative study method was utilized to deeply explore the structure, practices, and processes of the island's social welfare service delivery system. Qualitative case studies are suitable for deeply understanding complex social phenomena within a practical context (Gilgun, 1994), which coincided with the purpose of this study to concretely analyze the social welfare service delivery system of island areas in terms of their spatially and environmentally distinct characteristics.

### 3.2 Study Participants

The study participants were six social workers and related public officials responsible for practice in Shinan County's social welfare service delivery system. They were practitioners working in town and county administrative agencies and social welfare departments who possessed practical experience and understanding of the social welfare delivery system in island areas. The participants were selected through recommendations from their organizations and the researcher's direct

searching, and they voluntarily consented to participate in the study after the study's purpose and procedures had been explained to them.

### 3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth individual interviews conducted over approximately two months, from February to March 2025. Each interview lasted between one and two hours. The interview questions, composed by the researcher, concerned the operation of the social welfare delivery system in island areas, the constraints the participants experienced in the processes and practices and responses, their perceptions of the quality of the delivery system and the expertise within it, their experiences of cooperation with the local community, and suggestions for future improvements to the delivery system.

The interviews were recorded with the participants' consent and transcribed thereafter for use in the data analysis.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Content analysis was applied to analyze the data. The researcher repeatedly read the interview transcripts to identify the main themes and meaning units and then categorized them (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Schreier, 2012). During the analytical process, considering the special context of the island areas, the themes and meaning units were organized according to five main categories: structural constraints, delivery methods, local cooperation, the quality of the delivery system and the expertise within it, and proposals for restructuring.

In addition, member checking was conducted to reduce the subjectivity of the researcher's interpretations, and peer debriefing was used to enhance the reliability of the analysis and results.

### 3.5 Ensuring the Rigor of the Study

To ensure the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the qualitative study, the researcher used various strategies.

First, trusting relationships were formed with the study participants throughout the study process, and data were collected following explanation and consent. Second, during the data analysis, cross-reviews and peer reviews were conducted among the researchers to examine interpretations from diverse perspectives. Third, the transparency of the research process was secured by writing research notes and documenting the analytical process and results in detail. Fourth, the reliability of the research results was strengthened by analyzing exceptional cases and repeatedly reviewing the data (Schreier, 2012).

## 4. Study Result

### 4.1 Operations of the Social Welfare Service Delivery System as Experienced on the Ground in Island Areas

#### 4.1.1 Trust and Experienced Stability in a Community-Based Delivery System

Shinan County's social welfare service delivery system operates through a face-to-face, direct delivery method based on close relationships with the local community, and practitioners perceived this as a stable structure suitable for island areas.

In particular, relationship-based delivery, based on high levels of understanding and trust among recipients, was accepted as faster and more flexible than the formal system.:

*“The reason why services are delivered well is that volunteers actively participate and have a good understanding of the recipients’ needs.”* (Study Participant A)

*“Since services are delivered through women’s groups or volunteer organizations, the recipients naturally accept them, and the services operated center on relationships.”* (Study Participant B)

#### 4.1.2 Practitioners’ Interpretations of the Meaning of a Public-Centered Delivery System

Shinan County’s social welfare service delivery system, which is managed firsthand by public institutions because there are no private consignment organizations, was perceived by practitioners as a positive structure in terms of management consistency and the prevention of service omissions. In particular, the various social welfare policies designed and implemented by the public sector, tailored to the island areas’ characteristics, were perceived by practitioners as models that facilitated both institutional efficiency and practical effectiveness.:

*“Since there are no consignment organizations in Shinan County, public institutions handle the entire [service delivery] process. Therefore, selection and management are much easier.”* (Study Participant B)

*“The public bus system for seniors, the Sunshine Pension, and senior job programs are all implemented through public policies, and I believe they are highly effective.”* (Study Participant C)

*“There are very few privately operated bathhouses, and the public bathhouses in the town and village welfare centers receive favorable evaluations from local residents.”* (Study Participant A)

## 4.2 Constraints Faced During the Delivery of Social Welfare Services in Island Areas and Responses to Them

### 4.2.1 Physical Limitations Caused by the Natural Environment and Geographic Conditions

Islands, the sea, and climate are unpredictable variables that affect the social welfare service delivery system in Shinan County. The practitioners repeatedly experienced situations that prevented services from being provided on set schedules due to delays in ferry departures and winter cancelations, which they recognized as a serious constraint in ensuring the continuity and promptness of social welfare services:

*“In winter, ships often cannot depart, so we sometimes cannot provide services on time.”* (Study Participant E)

*“With an area 22 times the size of Seoul, geographical accessibility is limited, and in particular, the inefficiency of ferry services makes service delivery challenging.”* (Study Participant A)

#### 4.2.2 Lack of Human and Material Resources and Regional Imbalances

Island areas face situations in which securing even the basic resources necessary for social welfare service delivery is difficult due to a lack of young workers and rising logistics costs. Practitioners experienced inefficiencies and gaps across all areas of services, including meal provision, childcare, and social welfare service provision. They found that most social welfare service delivery was operated by administrative agencies:

*“The lack of human resources in their 20s or 30s and the lack of shipping routes often means that food cannot be brought in, and it is difficult to make enough food for meals.”* (Study Participant B)

*“Providing services to islands involves limitations in movements and delivery, and the burden of delivery and freight costs is huge.”* (Study Participant D)

#### 4.2.3 Usefulness and Limitations of Regional Cooperation

Regional cooperation, such as through town offices, welfare foundations, village groups, and volunteers, plays a central role in the social welfare service delivery system. However, the practitioners mentioned structural limitations, such as passivity in discovering blind spots, resource duplication, and information asymmetry. While acknowledging the usefulness of cooperation, practitioners considered it necessary to ensure its sustainability and build expertise:

*“Although the competent people in charge have a good understanding of the service recipients and provide reliable feedback, they are not proactive in discovering blind spots.”* (Study Participant D)

*“Due to the overlapping participation of volunteers, there are limited specializations by organization.”* (Study Participant A)

*“The Shinan County Welfare Foundation provides services in cooperation with towns and villages, but beneficiary information is only available in towns and villages, and the foundation has difficulty directly monitoring the field, which creates a risk of service omissions.”* (Study Participant E)

### 4.3 Practitioners’ Perspectives on the Quality of the Social Welfare Service Delivery System and Expertise

#### 4.3.1 Effectiveness of the Public-Focused Delivery System and Gaps in On-the-Spot Relevance

Although cash and in-kind support for basic living is reliable, practitioners expressed regret over the lack of active participation and experiential relationship-based social welfare services. They also claimed that the quality of social welfare should be evaluated using measures appropriate to local circumstances, rather than through simple comparisons:

*“Government-supported individual services are operated well. However, participatory welfare services face challenges due to a lack of operational facilities and accessibility issues.”* (Study Participant A)

*“There are islands where hospitals, cultural facilities, and even toilets are substandard. There are many areas where even basic needs are hardly met, so it is difficult to assess quality based on city standards.”* (Study Participant C)

### 4.3.2 Residents' Acceptance of and Reflections on Practical Feedback

Practitioners emphasized that residents understand their local conditions and accept social welfare services deficiencies, and they had experienced cases in which feedback from the field was actually reflected in policy adjustments and the operation of social welfare facilities. This demonstrates that the social welfare service delivery system is not unidirectional but involves a process based on cooperation between residents and practitioners:

*"The public bathhouse was small in the beginning, but it was expanded at the request of residents, and days for operation for men and women were divided so that more people could use it."* (Study Participant A)

*"Seniors often come to the town office to ask about things like work incentives. They feel comfortable asking questions."* (Study Participant B)

### 4.3.3 Need for Professional Services Tailored to Recipients

Social welfare services for specific recipient groups, such as children, adolescents, and people with disabilities, are still insufficient. The absence of social welfare services in areas where expertise is required, such as psychological and emotional support, counseling, and treatment, was clearly recognized as a problem by hands-on workers. They emphasized the need for a customized delivery system that goes beyond simple support:

*"Professional counseling and treatment services are often lacking. Support for various recipient groups, such as children, adolescents, and people with disabilities, needs to be subdivided more."* (Study Participant C)

## 4.4 A Delivery Practice Structure Created Through Collaboration with the Community

### 4.4.1 Reflection of Residents' Opinions Through Official Communication Channels

The Shinan County Office has a system for gathering residents' opinions through regular avenues for participation, such as the county governor's village tour meetings and social security council meetings, and these opinions are often reflected in policies and administration. Practitioners saw these avenues as means to narrow the gap between the administration and residents and enhance the timeliness of social welfare service delivery:

*"At the beginning of the year, local government heads personally visit towns and villages to listen to residents' concerns, and the heads of relevant departments review the relevant matters and make improvements."* (Study Participant A)

*"Village heads' meetings and welfare task force meetings are helpful for discovering welfare recipients and gathering residents' opinions."* (Study Participant B)

*"Through village meetings and conversations with county residents, residents' needs are conveyed to the county governor and administrative staff. It's easier to convey opinions than in the city."* (Study Participant C)

#### 4.4.2 Cooperation of Local Volunteer Organizations and the Practices of Public–Private Partnerships

At the core of the social welfare service delivery system is the active participation of private entities, such as town-level volunteer organizations, women's groups, and village councils. Practitioners recognized that these organizations functioned as intermediaries connecting social welfare policies with the locations where social welfare services are provided. They saw this cooperative structure as a major resource that facilitated community-based social welfare practices:

*"As with the kimjang Kimchi delivery project, the effectiveness of projects was enhanced when the administration planned them and all the town and village volunteer organizations participated."* (Study Participant A)

*"Women's groups, volunteer societies, and village associations are playing a significant role on the ground, directly delivering donated goods."* (Study Participant B)

#### 4.4.3 Multiple Participation of a Small Number of Workers and Dependence on Public Institutions

The aging of local residents and a shortage of workers led to many of the same individuals working in multiple organizations. Practitioners interpreted this as overloading delivery workers and shifting the responsibility of public institutions to the private sector:

*"There aren't enough local workers due to the aging population. Therefore, a small number of workers are working in various organizations, and the private sector is largely responsible for the delivery system."* (Study Participant C)

### 4.5 Restructuring of the Island Area Delivery System as Imagined by Practitioners

#### 4.5.1 Design of Regional Delivery Bases and Improved Accessibility

Recognizing a situation in which social welfare facilities are unevenly distributed, the practitioners proposed dividing Shinan County into regional units, establishing welfare hubs in central locations, and connecting them with public transportation. This can be interpreted as a space-centered approach that would address the structural/physical isolation of island areas:

*"Shinan County should be divided into four regions to efficiently build facilities and induce residents to use public buses to reach facilities in other towns and villages."* (Study Participant A)

*"It's true that this is a region consisting of islands, but facilities like welfare centers are lacking. As aging becomes a serious problem, it would be good to have welfare facilities organized by region."* (Study Participant E)

#### 4.5.2 Data-Based Administration and Improvement of the Workforce

To qualitatively improve the social welfare service delivery system, the practitioners asserted the need for an integrated information management system unique to Shinan County and a region-centered workforce planning strategy. They proposed these as means to reduce variations in social welfare service delivery that depend on individual practitioners' capabilities and to ensure continuity and consistency:

*“A database of recipients is needed. Although there are restrictions under the Personal Information Protection Act, a model unique to the Shinan model should be prepared based on an integrated survey.”* (Study Participant A)

*“I believe that projects and labor should be adjustable through workforce planning by region rather than by project unit.”* (Study Participant C)

#### 4.5.3 Attracting Professional Social Welfare Agencies and Restructuring the Volunteer Work Infrastructure

Practitioners recognized the absence of professional social welfare service providers as one of the most significant gaps in local welfare delivery. In particular, they emphasized the need to attract professional mobile social welfare service providers and revitalize volunteer groups mainly composed of young and middle-aged adults. This would necessitate the structural reorganization of the existing senior-centered delivery system:

*“Organizations that provide professional mobile services, such as counseling and treatment services, are positively necessary in the area.”* (Study Participant C)

*“Volunteer groups of people in their 20s to 40s should be revitalized.”* (Study Participant B)

## 5. Recommendations

The aim of this study was to closely examine how social welfare services are delivered in island areas and to identify the effects of island areas' unique geographical and environmental conditions social welfare practices. The intention was to analyze the strengths and limitations of the current island area social welfare service delivery system and to recommend a sustainable social welfare service delivery system that is suitable for island areas.

First, in the case of Shinan County, social welfare facilities cannot be distributed evenly because of the characteristics of the county, which consists of islands separated by sea. The entire area should be divided into four regions, and comprehensive central welfare hubs and dispersed facilities should be established by region to provide welfare spaces and services that can easily be accessed by residents. Concretely, an integrated network of welfare centers, counseling centers, and rehabilitation services should be established and linked to public bus services to improve convenience in moving within and beyond the islands, thereby overcoming the geographical constraints of the island areas and enabling all residents to reliably use at least minimum social welfare services.

Second, specialized services, such as psychological counseling, emotional support, and rehabilitation treatment for specific recipient groups, such as children, adolescents, and people with disabilities, are lacking. To respond to this deficiency, a specialized social mobile welfare service agency should be introduced to deliver counseling, treatment, and rehabilitation services directly to the island areas. Furthermore, regular patrol services should be operated to complement accessibility, strengthen expertise, and supplement the existing cash and in-kind support-centered delivery system. Furthermore, differentiated services that consider the characteristics of different recipients should be developed, and a relevant support system should be provided.

Third, although area-based cooperative networks of town offices, village groups, and volunteer organizations are a strength of Shinan County's social welfare delivery system, they have some limitations, such as passivity in discovering blind spots,

resource duplication, and information asymmetry. Therefore, public-private cooperation should be further systematized and regularized. The capacity of cooperative entities should be strengthened through the establishment of information-sharing platforms, and public-private joint training programs, and the capability to identify blind spots and support recipients should be enhanced. Furthermore, strategies to formally recognize the activities of private sector entities and strengthen administrative support to enhance the sustainability of public-private partnerships are required.

Fourth, a database of social welfare recipients must be established to enhance the consistency and efficiency of service provision. An integrated survey model unique to Shinan County is needed to systematically manage recipients' usage histories and support needs while respecting the requirements of the Personal Information Protection Act. In addition, social welfare workers should be rearranged and based in regional units, unlike under the traditional project oriented labor organization, and the flexibility and responsiveness of workforce planning should be strengthened to enhance residents' access to services within the region. Such efforts would reduce service delivery variations caused by differences in individual workers' competencies and would facilitate the development of a sustainable social welfare service delivery system.

Fifth, regarding the current volunteer work structure, which relies on older workers, a shift toward a new workforce planning approach is required to ensure effective social welfare service delivery. Volunteer groups comprising young adults in their 20s to 40s should be actively organized, and incentives should be provided to encourage young adults to participate in island society.

Despite the significance of this study, it has the following limitations. First, the researcher analyzed the social welfare service delivery system in the island areas of Shinan County; thus the study findings are not sufficiently generalizable to all islands. Furthermore, since the participants were mainly practitioners, this study did not capture the direct experiences and voices of residents who use social welfare services. In addition, because the study was conducted at a certain point in time, it may have failed to sufficiently capture variations in the social welfare service delivery system due to policy or environmental changes. To address these issues, studies should be conducted to compare various island areas, survey residents, and trace long-term phenomena.

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