Abstract
The development of effective leaders is important for rural communities as they strive to remain viable places to live and work. Many rural leaders have undergone leadership development training in an effort to build grass-roots leadership that will enable communities to address such issues as quality of life, economic development, sustainability or entrepreneurship. Anecdotal evidence from rural leaders who have undergone leadership development training suggested that rural leaders benefited from the training they completed; however, an instrument to measure rural leadership practices was not available. Although leadership instruments have been developed for use within business and education, questions can be raised about their application to rural settings in which many leaders work as volunteers in their communities and typical performance measures used in business or education do not apply. To address this void, a rural leadership practices instrument (RLPI) was developed and administered as a pilot test to rural leaders in two rural counties in North Carolina. The RLPI is used to quantitatively measure leadership behaviors or practices of persons in leadership roles. The data obtained through pilot testing was used to examine the factor structure of the instrument through factor analysis. Preliminary results show that the instrument measures five distinct leadership practices of rural leaders. Findings of this study will help improve and assess training of rural leaders that will in turn build stronger, more effective grass-roots leadership.