

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO FACILITATE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

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ABSTRACT

In order to promote resilient livelihoods in rural areas, an integrated approach to sustainable livelihoods is required. Through an exhaustive review of scholarly literature and publications, this paper presents a comprehensive analysis of the concept of an integrated approach to sustainable rural livelihood, while emphasising the key factors that determine its effectiveness. The effectiveness of rural development initiatives that promote inclusivity has been found to be contingent on numerous factors, as per prior research findings. These factors include community engagement, local and indigenous knowledge consideration, gender inclusivity, environmental sustainability, and strategic rural partnership. This paper can significantly contribute to the academic comprehension of rural livelihoods, resilience, and inclusive development practises, thereby paving the way for future research and academic advancement. Keywords: *Integrated, Rural, Livelihood, Sustainable, Development and Resilience*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of integrated livelihood encompasses a comprehensive approach aimed at fostering equitable progress and improving the well-being of rural communities across the entire country, with the ultimate goal of fostering sustainable development (Bruno, Fernandez & Balgopal, 2021; Syafar & Ulumi, 2021). The primary responsibility of the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development is to design policies and programmes that aim to foster inclusive rural development, alleviate poverty, and improve the overall well-being of individuals residing in rural regions (Noor & Ramin, 2012). The ministry engages in partnerships with various governmental entities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and community-based organisations to execute initiatives targeting the unique requirements and obstacles encountered by rural communities. These initiatives encompass community-based development projects, poverty alleviation programmes, sustainable agriculture endeavours, and rural transformation centres (Kunjuraman & Hussin, 2017; Ngah, Abdul Kadir, & Mohd Lajin, 2022). The Malaysian government is prioritising a holistic strategy to enhance rural livelihood and development, encompassing enhancements in road accessibility, digital infrastructure, energy provision, and water supply (Man & Manaf, 2022). Despite having made advancements, Malaysia continues to face the issue of fostering integrated livelihoods, particularly in rural regions where a substantial number of the population is involved in low-wage occupations within the agricultural sector and informal economy. Moreover, the persistent challenges of socioeconomic hardships, health issues, and inadequate access to food continue to afflict the low-income demographic, commonly referred to as the B40 group (Shahar et al., 2019). The efficacy of Malaysia's initiatives aimed at mitigating rural poverty remains uncertain, as poverty continues to persist as a longstanding concern that has the

potential to engender financial instability within the lower-income demographic, specifically among the rural impoverished (Dawood, Ghazali, & Samat, 2019; Sharizan, Redzuan & Rosman, 2021). Furthermore, there is a scarcity of research that thoroughly examines the aspects that enable a cohesive livelihood. Recent studies have been conducted by scholars who are investigating the relationship between rural development and transformation in the context of the sustainable development aim. For instance, Chan (2023) explores the concept of sustainable rural tourism, while another study focuses on revitalising the Malaysian Rural Community Centres. Based on a comprehensive assessment of existing literature, the present study aims to examine the ideas of integrated rural livelihood and analyse the key determinants that influence the efficacy of promoting integrated rural livelihood for the purpose of achieving sustainable development. The concept of an integrated rural livelihood underscores the significance of including and empowering all individuals within the rural community, particularly those who face marginalisation, including women, youth, and indigenous populations (Muhtar et al., 2023; Panakaje et al., 2023). The objective is to ensure equitable access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making mechanisms, while also supporting extremely disadvantaged households in their transition towards sustainable livelihoods and economic stability. In addition, it has been argued that the efficacy and sustainability of integrated rural development programmes can be enhanced by customising them to align with the distinct requirements and ambitions of indigenous communities (Achmad et al., 2023; Mamokhere & Meyer, 2023).

Rural communities are categorised according to their economic activity and geographical positioning, encompassing those situated in river valleys, high mountains, as well as agricultural and non-farming households (Dorward et al., 2007; Singha, 2013). According to Dijkstra and Poelman (2014) and Errico (2017), a region is classified as rural when it exhibits a population density below 150 individuals per square kilometre, and its residents predominantly consist of indigenous populations who actively preserve their unique cultural practises and customs. Rural lifestyles are intricately interconnected with agriculture, local economies, and the natural environment. Moreover, in contrast to urban populations, rural communities encounter greater challenges in attaining sustainable livelihoods as a result of their characteristic living conditions and disadvantaged socioeconomic status (Chen et al., 2020; Rashid et al., 2019). The authors Andress and Fitch (2016) have emphasised the enduring nature of economic inequality between urban and rural regions.

Rural livelihoods are persistently impacted by a range of issues, including inadequate infrastructure, limited access to finance services, restricted market access, and social disparities. The establishment of integrated livelihoods within rural regions is a crucial factor in bolstering the resilience of communities, enabling them to endure and recuperate from various adversities and pressures, all while preserving their ability to adjust and flourish amidst dynamic circumstances (Sapura et al., 2023). Furthermore, the implementation of integrated livelihood strategies in rural regions serves to enhance the capacity of individuals and communities to broaden their sources of income, foster the adoption of sustainable farming methods, enhance opportunities for education and skills development, and facilitate their involvement in decision-making procedures (Shahbaz et al., 2022; Yadaz et al., 2022). The implementation of sustainable rural development strategies that prioritise the promotion of integrated livelihoods has the potential to effectively address the poverty cycle, reduce

vulnerability, and establish viable routes for rural communities. Tran et al. (2021) argue that the achievement of sustainable livelihoods is a complex endeavour, as it is influenced by various elements that affect the effective generation of employment opportunities, growth in income, mitigation of risks, enhancement of food security, and utilisation of resources. Full community engagement and environmental sustainability are identified as crucial elements that contribute to sustainable development and the integrated livelihood of rural communities (Choi & Murray, 2010; Iqbal et al., 2022). This study does a comprehensive literature analysis to augment comprehension of the pivotal role that integrated rural livelihoods play in fostering sustainable development in rural regions. The primary objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the potential strategies that can contribute to a fair and resilient future for individuals residing in rural regions. The study seeks to explore opportunities for equitable growth and achievement, ensuring that all individuals in these places have equal prospects for personal development and success.

Numerous scholars have conducted studies on rural livelihoods and its correlation with sustainable development. For instance, Kamrudin et al. (2020) conducted an investigation on the sustenance of rural livelihoods by means of entrepreneurship and the advancement of creative villages. In their study, Hassan et al. (2021) investigate the implications of movement control orders on rural livelihoods in Malaysia. Similarly, Rashid et al. (2021) explore the establishment of a modern rural development framework for Malaysia. In a recent study, Rahman (2021) examines the notion of environmental citizenship as a means to promote comprehensive and sustainable development. Hence, the objective of this research is to examine the concept of integrated rural livelihoods as a strategy for promoting sustainable development.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This study was carried out with the objective of examining integrated Rural livelihoods to encourage Sustainable Development. To be specific, the objectives of this study can be specified in two folds as follows:

1. Identify the conceptual definition of integrated approaches to rural livelihood.
2. Analyse the key factors that influence the effectiveness of an integrated approach to facilitate sustainable livelihoods in rural areas.

RESEARCH METHOD

In light of the objective of this paper, which is to examine the findings from previous research that focused on the integration of rural livelihoods as a means to foster sustainable development, a secondary data gathering method was utilised to perform a comprehensive literature analysis. A preliminary literature review is a qualitative synthesis that functions as the primary research approach for composing a concept paper. The process of collecting data encompasses two distinct ways, specifically primary and secondary data collection methods (HR & Aithal, 2022).

The utilisation of secondary data analysis enables researchers to investigate pre-existing data sets and publicly available sources. This methodology allows scholars to get valuable perspectives and articulate well-informed assertions regarding the study issue, without