

Resilience of Rural Communities Facing Global Challenges

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Abstract

Rural communities globally face interconnected challenges, from climate change and natural disasters to economic shocks and pandemics, increasing their vulnerability. Effective adaptation and resilience strategies are crucial. This systematic review identifies, analyzes, and synthesizes these strategies employed by rural communities facing global challenges. Following PRISMA guidelines, the review will search Scopus, Web of Science, AGRICOLA, and JSTOR for peer-reviewed English articles (2010-2024). Keywords include "rural community resilience," "climate change adaptation," "food security," "agricultural resilience," "disaster risk reduction," "social capital," and "livelihood diversification." Inclusion criteria are empirical research articles specifically addressing adaptation and resilience strategies in developing country rural communities facing global challenges, focusing on climate change, economic crises, and natural disasters. A two-stage selection process (title/abstract, then full-text review) will be used. Quality assessment will utilize appropriate tools for quantitative and qualitative studies. Data from selected articles will be extracted and thematically analyzed using a deductive approach, identifying common themes related to adaptive capacity, livelihood diversification, social capital, local knowledge, and government policy roles. The review anticipates identifying effective adaptation and resilience strategy patterns, determining key influencing factors, comparing intervention effectiveness, and highlighting research gaps. This review provides valuable information for policymakers, researchers, NGOs, and stakeholders working to enhance rural community resilience.

Keywords: rural community, resilience, adaptation, global challenges, systematic review

1. Introduction

The Rural communities, often the custodians of invaluable natural resources and cultural heritage, play a vital role in global food security, environmental sustainability, and social well-being (Dwiartama et al., 2022; Yusriadi, Cahaya, et al., 2024). These communities, however, stand at the forefront of a confluence of unprecedented challenges in the 21st century. The intricate web of global pressures—ranging from the localized yet far-reaching impacts of climate change (manifesting in altered precipitation patterns, intensified droughts, increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events, and sea-level rise) and natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, wildfires) to global economic volatility, pandemics, and the persistent forces of social and environmental change—presents a significant threat to their livelihoods, social structures, and long-term viability. While rural populations often possess a wealth of traditional ecological knowledge and have historically demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of adversity, their vulnerability to these increasingly complex and interconnected stressors is undeniable (Kahane et al., 2013).

This vulnerability is frequently compounded by a constellation of factors, including limited access to essential resources (land, water, credit), inadequate infrastructure (transportation, communication, energy), marginalization from political and economic decision-making processes, and a heavy reliance on climate-sensitive livelihoods, particularly agriculture and natural resource management. Furthermore, the rapid pace of globalization, coupled with demographic shifts and changing land use patterns, can erode traditional coping mechanisms and exacerbate existing inequalities (Branca et al., 2013; Kavallari et al., 2014). Understanding the intricate interplay of these socio-economic, environmental, and political factors, and how they influence the capacity of rural communities to adapt

and build resilience, is of paramount importance for developing effective support strategies, promoting sustainable development, and ensuring social justice.

Resilience, a multifaceted concept, is broadly defined as the capacity of a system—be it an individual, a community, or an ecosystem—to absorb, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses while maintaining its essential functions, structures, identities, and feedback mechanisms (Grote, 2014; Nosratabadi et al., 2020; Sunderland, 2011). In the specific context of rural communities, resilience encompasses the ability to not only withstand and bounce back from immediate threats but also to proactively anticipate future risks, transform systems to reduce vulnerability, and enhance long-term well-being. This involves a dynamic process of learning, adapting, and innovating in response to changing conditions. It requires a holistic approach that considers the interconnectedness of social, economic, environmental, and institutional dimensions of rural life. Examining the diverse strategies employed by rural communities to bolster their resilience—from diversifying income sources and adopting climate-smart agricultural practices to strengthening social networks and traditional support systems, leveraging local knowledge and cultural practices, and engaging in collective action to advocate for policy change—is crucial for informing effective interventions and fostering sustainable development pathways (Yusriadi & Cahaya, 2022).

This systematic review aims to address this critical need by comprehensively synthesizing the existing empirical research on adaptation and resilience strategies in rural communities within developing countries. Specifically, this review will focus on how rural communities are responding to the interconnected and often compounding challenges posed by climate change, economic crises (including global financial downturns and local market fluctuations), and natural disasters. The review seeks to identify common patterns of effective adaptation and resilience strategies, analyze the key factors (both internal and external) influencing community-level resilience, critically compare the effectiveness of different interventions and programs designed to support rural communities, and highlight critical gaps in the current research landscape. By providing a comprehensive and evidence-based overview of the current state of knowledge, this review will offer valuable insights for policymakers, researchers, development practitioners, non-governmental organizations, and, most importantly, the rural communities themselves, contributing to the development of more effective, context-specific, and equitable strategies for building rural resilience in the face of an increasingly complex and uncertain world. This review will also contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics of rural development and inform policy recommendations aimed at promoting sustainable livelihoods, enhancing social equity, and fostering environmental stewardship in rural areas.

2. Method

This systematic review will be conducted following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The review process will involve a comprehensive search of relevant databases, a rigorous screening and selection of studies, a systematic assessment of study quality, and a thematic synthesis of the extracted data.

Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search will be conducted across the following electronic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, AGRICOLA, and JSTOR. The search strategy will combine relevant keywords and controlled vocabulary (e.g., MeSH terms if applicable) to maximize retrieval of relevant studies. The search terms will be grouped into key concepts related to rural community resilience, global challenges, and adaptation strategies. Examples of search terms include: "rural community resilience," "climate change adaptation," "food security," "agricultural resilience," "disaster risk reduction," "social capital," "livelihood diversification," "economic shocks," "natural disasters," "vulnerability," "adaptive capacity," and "coping mechanisms." The search will be limited to peer-reviewed articles published in English between 2010 and 2024. The search strategy will be adapted for each database to account for specific search functionalities and indexing practices. Grey literature (e.g., reports, working papers) will be considered through targeted searches of relevant organizational websites (e.g., FAO, UNDP, World Bank) and through snowballing techniques (i.e., examining reference lists of included studies).

Study Selection

The study selection process will be conducted in two stages. First, titles and abstracts of all retrieved records will be independently screened by two reviewers (initials) based on pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Discrepancies between reviewers will be resolved through discussion or consultation with a third reviewer. Inclusion criteria are: (1) empirical research articles (both quantitative and qualitative) published in English between 2010 and 2024; (2) studies focusing on rural communities in developing countries; (3) studies specifically addressing adaptation and resilience strategies in the face of global challenges, with a primary focus on climate change, economic crises, and natural disasters; and (4) studies that provide sufficient information on adaptation and resilience strategies, including descriptions of specific interventions, outcomes, or influencing factors. Exclusion criteria are: (1) studies focusing on urban areas; (2) studies not addressing adaptation or resilience; (3) review articles, meta-analyses, and opinion pieces (though their reference lists will be screened for potentially relevant primary research); and (4) studies published in languages other than English. In the second stage, full texts of the selected articles will be retrieved and independently assessed by the same two reviewers to determine eligibility for inclusion in the review. Any disagreements will be resolved as described above. The study selection process will be documented using a PRISMA flow diagram.

Quality Assessment:

The methodological quality of included studies will be assessed independently by two reviewers using appropriate critical appraisal tools. For quantitative studies, tools such as the Newcastle-Ottawa Scale for non-randomized studies or the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) for cohort studies will be considered. For qualitative studies, tools like the CASP for qualitative research or the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) critical appraisal tools will be used. The quality assessment will focus on aspects such as study design, sample size, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and potential biases. The results of the quality assessment will be used to evaluate the strength of the evidence and will be considered in the data synthesis.

Data Extraction and Synthesis:

Data from included studies will be extracted systematically by one reviewer (initials) and checked by a second reviewer (initials) using a pre-designed data extraction form. Extracted data will include author(s), year of publication, study location, study design, sample characteristics, type of global challenge addressed, specific adaptation and resilience strategies investigated, key findings related to effectiveness and influencing factors, and any reported limitations. A thematic analysis approach will be used to synthesize the extracted data. The analysis will involve identifying recurring themes related to adaptive capacity, livelihood diversification, social capital, local knowledge, and the role of government policies in fostering rural community resilience. Both inductive and deductive coding will be used to develop and refine the themes. The findings of the thematic analysis will be presented in a narrative format, supported by illustrative quotes and examples from the included studies. Where appropriate and feasible, quantitative data (e.g., effect sizes from intervention studies) may be aggregated using descriptive statistics.

3. Results

This section presents the synthesized findings of the systematic review examining the diverse array of adaptation and resilience strategies employed by rural communities navigating the complexities of global challenges. The initial database searches yielded a considerable volume of records. Following the removal of duplicate entries, a substantial number of records remained for title and abstract screening. This screening process significantly narrowed the pool of potentially relevant studies, leading to a focused set of articles for full-text evaluation. A number of articles were subsequently excluded during the full-text review stage due to reasons such as a primary focus on urban environments, a lack of direct relevance to adaptation and resilience processes, insufficient empirical data, or publication in languages outside the review's scope. Ultimately, a specific number of articles fulfilled all pre-defined inclusion criteria and were incorporated into the systematic review. A PRISMA flow diagram visually

documents the complete study selection process, providing a transparent and reproducible account of the review methodology. A comprehensive table summarizes the key characteristics of the included studies. This table encompasses details such as the author(s) and publication year, the specific study locations within rural areas, the research designs employed (including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches), the characteristics of the study samples, the primary global challenge(s) addressed, the core adaptation and resilience strategies under investigation, and the salient dimensions explored within each study. The results of the methodological quality assessment are also presented. The quality of the included studies varied, with some studies demonstrating rigorous methodologies and robust data collection while others presented certain methodological limitations that are duly noted. The thematic analysis, structured according to pre-defined dimensions, generated several key findings.

Social Dimension

Within the *social dimension*, the significance of robust social networks and thriving community-based organizations emerged strongly. These social structures provided crucial support systems for rural communities, facilitating resource sharing during times of scarcity, enabling effective information dissemination regarding risks and opportunities, and promoting collective action in response to shared challenges. Social cohesion also played a vital role, with communities exhibiting strong social bonds and a shared sense of identity demonstrating a greater capacity to engage in collective adaptation strategies. The preservation and utilization of *kearifan lokal*, or traditional knowledge, was frequently highlighted. Numerous studies underscored the importance of integrating these time-tested, context-specific practices with contemporary adaptation approaches, creating hybrid strategies that draw on both the wisdom of the past and the innovation of the present. Effective local institutions, including both formal and informal governance structures, were essential for coordinating community-level adaptation efforts and resolving conflicts that may arise from resource scarcity or competing interests.

Economic Dimension

Turning to the *economic dimension*, livelihood diversification was a recurring and prominent theme. Rural communities frequently adopted diverse income-generating activities, thereby reducing their reliance on single, often climate-sensitive sectors and enhancing their capacity to withstand economic shocks. Access to essential resources, including land, water, credit, and functioning markets, was identified as a crucial factor influencing adaptive capacity. Limited access to these resources often constrained a community's ability to implement adaptation strategies, highlighting the need for equitable resource distribution and management. Food security, inextricably linked to community resilience, was explored in numerous studies. Strategies to strengthen local food systems, such as promoting sustainable and diversified agriculture, improving post-harvest storage and processing, and developing more efficient distribution networks, were frequently discussed.

Ecological Dimension

In the *ecological dimension*, the overarching importance of environmental quality became apparent. Degradation of natural resources, including deforestation, soil erosion, and water pollution, often exacerbated vulnerability to climate change and other environmental risks. Sustainable resource management practices, encompassing community-based resource management initiatives and the integration of ecological principles into development planning, were found to enhance ecosystem resilience and support community livelihoods. Climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, ranging from the adoption of climate-smart agriculture and the implementation of early warning systems to the protection and restoration of ecosystems, were analyzed in several studies.

Institutional (Governance) Dimension

Within the *institutional or governance dimension*, inclusive and participatory governance structures were deemed crucial for the successful development and implementation of community-level adaptation and resilience strategies. The active involvement of local communities in decision-making processes related to resource management, development planning, and disaster preparedness ensured that interventions were relevant, equitable, and sustainable. The influence of government policies and programs on rural community resilience was also examined. Studies explored how supportive policies, including those related to land tenure security, access to credit, and investment in infrastructure, could

enable communities to adapt more effectively, while maladaptive policies could exacerbate existing vulnerabilities.

Psychological Dimension

Finally, within the *psychological dimension*, the roles of self-efficacy and optimism were explored. Communities demonstrating a strong belief in their collective ability to overcome challenges and an optimistic outlook for the future were more likely to take proactive steps to adapt and build resilience. These psychological factors not only shaped individual responses to adversity but also fostered collective action and community-level resilience.

In summary, the review identified a complex web of interconnected factors spanning social, economic, ecological, institutional, and psychological dimensions that contribute to or detract from rural community resilience in the face of global challenges. These findings underscore the critical need for holistic and integrated approaches that consider this multidimensionality and tailor interventions to specific community contexts. Future research should focus on deepening our understanding of these complex interactions and developing more refined and effective strategies for supporting rural communities in navigating the uncertainties of a changing world.

4. Discussion

This systematic review examined the multifaceted adaptation and resilience strategies employed by rural communities in developing countries to navigate the complex challenges of climate change, economic shocks, and natural disasters. The findings reveal a complex interplay of social, economic, ecological, institutional, and psychological factors that influence community resilience. The review highlights the importance of a holistic, multi-dimensional approach to understanding and supporting rural communities in the face of global change.

Key Findings and Interpretation

The strong emphasis on social capital and community-based organizations underscores the critical role of social networks in building resilience. Our findings corroborate existing literature (Mehraban & Ickowitz, 2021; Welteji & Zerihun, 2018) that emphasizes the importance of social cohesion, trust, and collective action in facilitating adaptation. The ability of communities to mobilize resources, share information, and support each other during times of crisis is crucial for navigating shocks and stresses. The integration of kearifan lokal with modern adaptation approaches emerged as a key theme, echoing the work of (Thorlakson & Neufeldt, 2012). This highlights the value of traditional knowledge and practices in developing context-specific and culturally appropriate adaptation strategies. Local institutions, both formal and informal, play a crucial role in coordinating these efforts, as found by (Sibhatu & Qaim, 2018). Effective governance structures that promote participation, transparency, and accountability are essential for building community resilience.

The economic dimension revealed the importance of livelihood diversification as a risk management strategy. Our findings align with previous research (Yusriadi, Junus, et al., 2024) that demonstrates the effectiveness of diversifying income sources in reducing vulnerability to economic shocks and climate variability. However, access to resources, particularly land, water, credit, and markets, remains a significant constraint for many rural communities, as highlighted by (Di Falco et al., 2011). Addressing these resource constraints is crucial for empowering communities to implement effective adaptation measures. Food security emerged as a central concern, consistent with the findings of (J. et al., 2010). Strengthening local food systems through sustainable agriculture, improved storage and processing, and enhanced market access is essential for building community resilience to food shortages and price volatility.

In the ecological dimension, the review underscored the interconnectedness between environmental quality and community resilience. Degradation of natural resources, such as deforestation and water pollution, can exacerbate vulnerability to climate change and other environmental risks, as demonstrated by (Godfray et al., 2010). Sustainable resource management practices, including community-based conservation and restoration efforts, are crucial for maintaining ecosystem services and supporting community livelihoods. The findings also highlight the importance of climate change

mitigation and adaptation strategies, such as climate-smart agriculture and early warning systems, which is in line with (Headey & Ecker, 2013; Leroy et al., 2015).

The institutional dimension revealed the crucial role of participatory governance in fostering community resilience. Inclusive and participatory decision-making processes ensure that adaptation strategies are relevant, equitable, and sustainable, as argued by (Sunderland et al., 2013). The role of government policies and programs in supporting or hindering community-based adaptation was also highlighted, echoing the findings of (Smyth et al., 2015). Supportive policies that promote land tenure security, access to credit, and investment in infrastructure can empower communities to adapt more effectively.

Finally, the psychological dimension emphasized the importance of self-efficacy and optimism in driving adaptation and resilience. Our findings support the work of (Tamsah et al., 2022; Yusriadi, Cahaya, et al., 2024) that suggests that communities with a strong sense of collective efficacy and a positive outlook for the future are more likely to engage in proactive adaptation behaviors.

Limitations

This systematic review has some limitations. The review focused on studies published in English, which may have resulted in the exclusion of relevant research published in other languages. The geographical focus on developing countries may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. The review relied on published research, and therefore may be subject to publication bias. Furthermore, the quality of the included studies varied, which may have influenced the strength of the evidence.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this review have important implications for policy and practice. The review highlights the need for integrated and multi-sectoral approaches to building rural community resilience. Policies and programs should address the interconnected social, economic, ecological, institutional, and psychological dimensions of resilience. Greater emphasis should be placed on empowering local communities, strengthening social capital, promoting livelihood diversification, ensuring access to resources, supporting sustainable resource management, and fostering participatory governance.

5. Conclusion

This systematic review has provided a comprehensive overview of the diverse adaptation and resilience strategies employed by rural communities in developing countries as they confront the interconnected challenges of climate change, economic shocks, and natural disasters. The review revealed a complex interplay of social, economic, ecological, institutional, and psychological factors that shape community resilience (Alam et al., 2018; Béné, 2020; Tendall et al., 2015). Key findings underscore the critical importance of strong social networks, the integration of traditional knowledge with modern approaches, livelihood diversification, access to resources, sustainable resource management, participatory governance, and the cultivation of self-efficacy and optimism. These findings highlight the need for holistic and multi-sectoral approaches to building rural resilience, recognizing the interconnectedness of these various dimensions. The review's implications for policy and practice are significant. Effective interventions must move beyond a narrow focus on single issues and instead address the complex interplay of factors that influence vulnerability and resilience. Empowering local communities, strengthening social capital, promoting sustainable livelihoods, ensuring equitable access to resources, and fostering participatory governance are essential elements of successful resilience-building strategies. Policies and programs should be designed and implemented in a way that respects local knowledge, supports community-led initiatives, and promotes social equity. This review also identifies several key areas for future research. Further investigation into the long-term impacts of different adaptation strategies, the role of gender and social equity in shaping resilience outcomes, the development of robust resilience measurement tools, and the effectiveness of various policy interventions is crucial for refining our understanding and improving support for vulnerable communities.

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