

Sustainable Development Goals and Rural Sustainability: A Review of Literature on Rural Development Perspectives

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Abstract

Since the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, the idea of sustainable development has attracted a lot of interest from around the world. Because rural areas are closely related to agriculture, natural resource management, livelihoods, poverty reduction, and environmental conservation, rural development is essential to accomplishing these goals. This essay examines the body of research on the significance of the Sustainable Development Goals, with a particular emphasis on sustainability and rural development. The study emphasizes how sustainable rural change is facilitated by the integration of social justice, economic growth, and environmental preservation. It looks at a number of aspects of rural sustainability, such as reducing poverty, ensuring food security, creating jobs, fostering community involvement, adapting to climate change, and using resources sustainably. The assessment also highlights significant obstacles to SDG implementation in rural areas, including poor infrastructure, ignorance, a lack of institutional support, and environmental deterioration. The study also highlights the significance of community-based strategies, local governance, and policy interventions in fostering sustainable rural development. The assessment comes to the conclusion that attaining the SDGs necessitates a development plan that is inclusive, balanced, and supports rural economies while guaranteeing social well-being and environmental sustainability. For scholars, decision-makers, and development professionals involved in sustainable rural development, the study offers insightful information.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Rural Development, Sustainability, Environmental Conservation, Rural Livelihoods, Sustainable Rural Development, Climate Resilience, Poverty Alleviation.

1. Introduction

Understanding the connection between rural development, sustainability, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) depends heavily on the literature review. By looking at earlier research, theories, regulations, and useful strategies pertaining to sustainable development in rural regions, it offers a thorough foundation. Since the SDGs seek to address global concerns including poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, food insecurity, and climate change, examining the body of existing literature

enables academics to pinpoint the advancements, gaps, and new problems that need to be addressed in order to achieve these objectives at the rural level. Sustainable rural development has become crucial for attaining long-term economic, social, and environmental balance since rural regions are directly linked to agriculture, natural resource management, livelihood creation, and community well-being.

Understanding how various academics, governments, and international organizations have interpreted and used sustainability concepts in rural environments is another benefit of a literature review. It emphasizes how crucial it is to incorporate the three pillars of sustainability—economic development, social justice, and environmental preservation—into rural planning and development plans. Additionally, examining earlier studies helps uncover effective models, policies, and community-based practices that support gender equality, education, healthcare, resource conservation, sustainable livelihoods, and climate resilience in rural areas. In the context of SDGs, particularly Goals 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 11 (Sustainable Communities), 13 (Climate Action), and 15 (Life on Land), the literature review becomes crucial for understanding the multidimensional nature of rural sustainability.

Furthermore, by identifying suitable frameworks, indicators, and research gaps, the literature evaluation offers theoretical and methodological guidance for upcoming studies. It aids academics in critically examining the social, economic, and environmental effects of sustainability projects on rural communities. Thus, a systematic review of literature is essential for developing informed policies, effective strategies, and evidence-based solutions that can contribute to sustainable rural development and the successful achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

2. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to examine the concept and significance of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the context of rural development and sustainability.

3. Database and Methodology

The study is based on secondary data sources. For that, various journals, reports, magazines and online sources have been used. The articles have been thoroughly examined to gain insights about sustainable development across three pillars of sustainability and rural development.

4. Discussion and Results

The concept of sustainable development with respect to its concept, three pillars of sustainability and rural development has been discussed in different sections as follows:

4.1 Understanding the concept of Sustainable Development

Muscalu et al. (2016) delve into the concept of sustainable development, characterising it as a mode of socio-economic evolution that emphasises the equilibrium between socio-economic systems and natural capital. Human existence relies on the environment and its resources. During the history of expansion, the authors claim that the environment was little considered. Nonetheless, the extensive environmental destruction means environmental concerns must be included for the public good, security and stability of society. Lempert's (2017) comparison between the sustainable development goals and the global millennium development goals. While detractors argue the Sustainable Development Goals shouldn't mention the Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals seems inspired by the

MDGs. Countries can negotiate climate objectives with ‘flexibility’ making goals very difficult to achieve, they said. The same reason applies in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. Consequently, countries are being easy on the aim of working together to do this. The Sustainable Development Goals are better than the Millennium Development Goals however they do not meet the goals. Sustainable development refers to a process that meets social and economic needs while taking a qualitative viewpoint with regards to the interests of people, all the while damaging the environment less and defending natural resources. The objective is to foster an improved world through the equilibrium of social, economic, and environmental elements, thereby safeguarding the enduring survival of human society and its surroundings. This idea combines the safeguarding of the environment with social and economic considerations, highlighting the importance of using resources wisely for both present and future generations. Awolusi et al. (2020) examined how economic growth influences environmental sustainability in BRICS nations from 1990 to 2017. The analysis utilising ARDL and CS-ARDL models revealed a long-term co-integration between economic growth and environmental sustainability. The findings indicated that although GDP growth initially has a detrimental impact on environmental degradation in the short term, this pattern shifts in the long term, aligning with the Environmental Kuznets Curve hypothesis.

Sadollah et al. (2020) offers an in-depth examination of the interconnected ideas of sustainability and optimisation, emphasising their growing significance. This examination delves into the ways in which optimisation techniques can improve comprehensive sustainability, covering environmental, social, economic, and energy dimensions. The review meticulously examines sustainable development through the lens of energy and explores the application of optimisation metaheuristic algorithms in contemporary literature related to sustainability.

Ghosh (2021) investigates the interplay of sustainable development and the old indigenous knowledge system of India and argues that the principles of the old indigenous knowledge system may throw new light on the contemporary world. The concept of Dharma, Ahimsa, and Ecological Harmony and Its Importance for Sustainability- an Analysis. The study employs various disciplines to show that ancient techniques can be translated into modern systems to meet global sustainability goals. Lichev (2022) defines sustainable development as the quest for environmentally friendly solutions that are beneficial for the future generation. It describes the basic principles, objectives, and functions among the economy, society and ecosystem. It is vital for business owners to adhere to a responsible business model. According to a recent article by Kadomtseva (2023), the sustainable development has greatly strengthened. This publication is devoted to outlining the evolution of the sustainable development conception. The sustainable development conception arose from the environmental problems. However, today, this conception is interpreted as a more global one. The creation of 17 Sustainable Development Goals by the UN indicates more comprehensive human development. This study shows a rethinking of economic principles in the face of new global challenges. It offers a comprehensive overview of the evolution of approaches that have been developed for sustainable economic, social, and environmental development. This paper studies the Russian and foreign literature in order to identify the most significant trends and offer some perspectives for the future of the concept. Kaimovs (2024) offers a succinct overview of sustainable development, its historical inception, main theories and practical implementation in the world. The key interplay between the three characteristics environment, economics and society was exhibited in it. The Sustainable Development Thesis says that future generations should not be deprived of an

opportunity to meet their own needs. The study envisages a global future that is equitable and livable from the perspectives of all stakeholders.

The global ecological and economic crises are primarily caused by the harm to the environment, which is explained by human development and human economic activity (Kornilova and Vikulenko, 2024). The association of culture and nature is becoming more innovative. Recently, new methods have emerged to illustrate the significance of environmental safety. A systematic mechanism planning in the improvement of human economic activities in the biosphere and managing natural and socio-cultural resources that are improved in the future is known as sustainable development. Qasimi (2025) conducted a survey with an interest in how to produce smart sustainable development in the disadvantaged nations. The research is grounded in the fundamental principles of the Triple Bottom Line, Ecological Modernisation Theory and Sustainable Livelihoods Approach. It emphasizes that inclusive policy-making and investment in education and sustainable agriculture, boosting renewable energy and public-private partnerships will all be needed. This can be illustrated on the ground with cases such as Costa Rica, Rwanda and Bangladesh.

4.2 Sustainable Rural Development

Sharma (2012) studied poverty in the rural areas. While people enjoy meals three times a day; tea in the morning enough clothes; own a house; have a pair of shoes per person in the house and but poor in the sense that they leave bottom in their own caste groups. The situation hasn't improved in the murky world of Russian organized crime either, with Russia's economy seeming to shrink. According to Jerome (2012), Nigeria has sufficient resources that have not yet been tapped into which can help in achieving poverty reduction and sustainable development. He promotes the idea of shrinking scale and adopting an element of unpredictability in policymaking. Empower the public to make the government formulate suitable policies in order to stop corruption that disrupts sustainable development. In public administration services, the culture of false mismanagement, overspending and fiscal impropriety fostered up and down needs to end. As stated by Sobczyk in 2014, the meaning of the term 'the sustainable development of rural areas' covers economic, social and ecological issues. The need for sustainable natural and cultural heritage is underscored and economic success is critical for stable job opportunities and environmental protection. The author proposes organic farming, agritourism, alternative energy use, environmental education, etc. to foster common commitment to sustainability in the rural areas. The conceptual framework of sustainability of rural livelihood by Baffoe and Matsuda (2017). The measurable and substantial component for a rural dwelling. The aim is to equip decision-makers with relevant, measurable, and useful tools for formulating sustainable livelihood strategies and actions. Also, move beyond tokenistic rhetoric about improving rural living with practical solutions. Kartseva et al. (2022) in their paper examines the integration of environmental elements for sustainable rural development, emphasising the restoration and conservation of natural ecosystems, particularly water bodies. The paper outlines the results from collaborative projects between Russia and Finland that examined the environmental conditions of selected rural regions. The initiatives effectively enhanced the environmental conditions of agricultural enterprises while also informing the local community, especially students, about ecological standards through activities such as nature studies, clean-up efforts, and surveys, which contributed to the advancement of agri-tourism and ecological village initiatives.

Taryono et al. (2024) introduce an innovative framework aimed at boosting the economic potential of villages in Bantan Subdistrict, Bengkalis Regency, with a significant focus on sustainability. Through the examination of data from the Village Potential Survey and the execution of comprehensive interviews, the

study reveals that tourism, agriculture, and cultural heritage serve as key economic drivers. This also underscores obstacles like infrastructure deficiencies and market seclusion, suggesting a cooperative framework that includes government, communities, and the private sector to promote economic development while maintaining environmental sustainability.

Skoryk (2024) in his paper presents a conceptual framework aimed at promoting the sustainable development of rural areas, acknowledging their growing significance in regional economies. It highlights that attaining sustainable rural development necessitates careful planning, the execution of socio-economic initiatives, and the application of diverse regional regulatory tools. The main objective of these policies is to diminish socio-economic inequalities between urban and rural regions, while simultaneously enhancing the well-being of the rural community.

4.3 Sustainable Development and Three Pillars of Sustainability

Xepapadeas (2014), in his study, presented several basic concepts about Sustainability and Environmental sustainability and a conceptual framework for the building of cost-benefits standards. The establishment will take note of it that a single policy cannot deliver on Sustainable Development, Environmental Sustainability, Green Economy and Green Growth simultaneously. The Needs of Many Purposes Criteria Calls for, Project Selection and Policy Formulation More Professional Strategies Social sustainability is the continual assumption that well-being will be maintained in these spheres: ecological, social, economic, political and cultural. According to Yugendar (2014), the reading material describes social sustainability as that situation which is achieved by maintaining the social capital. Social capital refers to the funding and services that offer social benefits or beneficial secondary qualities that are positive and cheapening in nature. The authors emphasise the importance of empowering the communities through their social capital, strong civil society, shared ideals and equality of rights. Conversely, problematization of social disintegration and violence are seen as serious barriers to social sustainability. Put simply, the correct identification and retention of social capital are contributors of disturbance control and peace building. The research conducted by Baffoe and Mutisya (2015) on social sustainability indicators and their empirical application was done using composite index techniques. Social sustainability is often overlooked, despite being complex, controversial and relatively neglected with respect to the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. This study identified three important dimensions namely a representation mechanism, collective state, and an individual access. The study used the three dimensions to measure social sustainability in Kibera, Kenya. The study found that the level of social sustainability was medium. They concluded that the highest contributing factor was a collective state. Boyer et al. (2016) discuss the persistent ambiguity surrounding the 'social pillar' of sustainability that tends to struggle to harmonise economic, environmental and social priorities. The authors believe the plurality of valid interpretations of the notion and the absence of cross-disciplinary studies account for a conflict in the concept. The paper describes five other applications of social sustainability. These exist in the literature and in reality. As such, it results in a systematic, integrated, area-based strategy which sees social, economic and environmental challenges as related rather than isolated.

Ketschau (2017) distinguishes between two forms of social change: sustainable social change that refers to the reconstruction of a socially sustainable society and social sustainable change, which relates to the mainstreaming of sustainability in social sectors. This demonstrates a comprehensive framework of social justice as an important normative foundation that connects the two ideas and deals with the complexity of social sustainability. We propose a composite model where concerns of future generations, individual

versus societal view, and inter-class allocation of resources, etc. are integrated to arrive at a holistic social sustainability theory. Orlova and Kuznetsov (2018) conducted an examination of sustainable development within economic systems. By showing the global economic disparities and environmental damages caused by existing technologies, production and consumption patterns, they highlighted this fact in their article. The demand for an OPTIMAL balance between economic, social and environmental priority in innovative economic thinking leads to prudent use of resource and sustainable development. The early signs or warnings about the ecological disasters were formulated much before the actual happening of the disaster itself. This knowledge gave rise to a plethora of worldwide sustainable development initiatives. However, it has been hard to arrive at a constructive split between economic progress and the environment.

Mohamed et al. (2019) in their paper concentrate on defining and analysing the social aspect of sustainable development, emphasising its growing acknowledgement within the wider framework of development. The analysis examines the historical evolution of development, highlighting a previous focus on economic and environmental factors, while also recognising a recent transition towards acknowledging the importance of the social dimension as essential. The authors seek to clarify the definition of social development, tackling the existing disagreement, and enhance the overall comprehension of this vital element of sustainability. Batalhão et al., (2021) in their study explored economic strategies for sustainable development, highlighting the essential importance of the economic aspect in reaching sustainability objectives. The review includes various economic measurements and methodologies, including resource accounting, greening GDP, sustainable growth models for the assessment and management of sustainability. Greater awareness is required to move beyond the interconnections that today's practices habitually neglect. The advantages and disadvantages of the various techniques are discussed. The aim of this discussion is to open up the conversation on these sets of economic indicators and how they contribute to the debate and implementation of sustainable development. Winston (2021) observes that there is ambiguity regarding social sustainability and sustainable Communities which hinders effective policy implementation and progress monitoring. Social sustainability is now being framed in such a way that the people's fundamental "sufficiency" needs must be met within the earth's limits – linking social & environmental.

It showcases a vision of sustainability for communities showing a close relation with social setting and the environment. Moreover, this reveals how the recovery of housing can offer a social and environmental solution and help to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals. According to Mensah (2021), although social sustainability is essential for sustainable development, it is often neglected in discussion and practice. Social sustainability means the safeguarding critical social well-being of current and future generations. This includes equity, peace, educational and health opportunities. The analysis shows that there is SS integration via strategic planning, policy development, investigation and advocacy, necessitating cooperation among stakeholders.

Bansode (2022) discusses the significance of sustainable development and environmental factors for the world economy in the contemporary world. Real sustainability can occur when environment, society and economy are all in sync. The author argues that unless such ideals are stressed, it would not be sustainable of the growth rate. It is essential to obtain economic growth by the conservation of natural resources and to build the environment on the most important ecological and social imperatives so as to reduce the conflict between the present and the future. According to Mazloun (2022), wellness activities are vital for achieving a sustainable society. However, this function is mostly overlooked. According to some people,

social sustainability is when people get empowered and communities get developed through wellness programs. It will also contribute to the circular economy and is essential for promoting global sustainable development in its social, environmental and economic dimensions. The study's findings indicate that wellness practices could be a wonderful avenue for further research to sustain the social gap. Nail and Dahmani (2024) emphasize the importance of social sustainability in the conservation of the cultural assets of the UNESCO World Heritage site of M'Zab Valley in southern Algeria. A survey of 200 homes was conducted to measure the social networking, feeling safe, sense of attachment to the site, quality of home and quality of life of the two fortified villages. The findings reveal that the resident person prefer quality rather than participation in PTS. The strengths and also the problems of the Mozabite group in confronting social changes. A large portion of residents feel satisfied and only a small portion wants to leave which means the place is thriving.

Diwangkoro et al. (2025) examines social sustainability in traditional Javanese settlements in Selopamiro Village, Yogyakarta, emphasising its foundation in the philosophy of Hamemayu Hayuning Bawana, which underscores the importance of harmony between humans and nature. Important features consist of limited barriers to encourage community engagement, the incorporation of pendopo as welcoming public areas, and flexibility through traditional knowledge such as the preservation of teak trees. The study presents a social architecture model that combines physical design with community cohesion and reinterprets Javanese philosophy for climate adaptation, offering practical implications for inclusive tourism, culture-based conservation, and architectural education.

5. Conclusions

Emerging research seeks to address issues like the persistence of poverty affecting critical satisfaction of governance and environment and nascent optimism of SMART villages and sustainable livelihoods. The majority of these activities focus on the area of theory or macro-policy analysis. Current micro-level studies conducted at the village level do not link social, economic, and environmental factors with lived experience which include caste-based disempowerment, local governance, social capital, and community engagement. Besides, although there are quite a number of models and techniques available, many research soon find themselves down the rabbit hole with no systematic studies to assess the combined effects of a number of interacting components on rural welfare and sustainable development outcomes. In rural areas and especially in the developing world, theorization, execution and their implications have begun to drift apart.

Most studies have a home and foreign perspective. However, little attention has been paid to the setting and experiences of sustainable development projects in rural/village settings. Moreover, there is a dearth of integrated empirical research that simultaneously evaluates social, economic and environmental issues and community engagement and local government demand. In addition, there is a gap between theory and practice, and advanced methodologies are not regularly applied to establish links among various development aspects to achieve development outcomes.

The connections between safeguarding culture and sustainable development are increasingly recognised, though several important gaps remain. Most literature is concerned with the theoretical integration of cultural and environmental, economic and social issues. However, data on the ground is limited on how this initiative leads to sustainable development outcomes in a rural or heritage village context. Many of the studies concerned with policy frameworks, particular instances or design perspectives. Only a few studies consider similar effects at the community level, stakeholder participation, and livelihood

generation. Connections between historical conservation and sustainability are emerging. Nevertheless, there is a lack of integrated studies examining the interrelationships among various aspects, such as tourism, the local economy, culture, and the environment. Also, the topics of scalability, long-term sustainability, and the balance between conservation and existing development go unaddressed, especially in the emerging locations where heritage wealth exists with social and economic challenges.

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