

A Literature Review on the Livelihood Resilience in Relocation Areas for Poverty Alleviation

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ABSTRACT

The report discusses the resilience of farmers' livelihoods and factors that impacting it before and after the relocation for poverty alleviation, which is important for improving farmers' adaptability and cultivating the sustainable livelihood development. By strengthening resilience, it not only promotes sustainable development in impoverished areas, but it also lay the solid ground for individuals and communities to get rid of poverty. Poverty alleviation must go beyond material support, which should also focus on cultivating the livelihood resilience of relocated farmers to achieve sustainability that lasts. However, the academic community has not yet established a standard for measuring resilience, which has limited studies researching on this concept to relocation and farmers' livelihoods. Also, it is also controversial about the role of resilience in improving the welfare of the poor, with limited understanding of the formation and mechanisms. The study uses review to investigate the likelihood resilience of farmers in relocated areas, that brought up the concept of livelihood resilience, and also compare its levels before and after relocation. The influencing factors are then identified with proposed strategies for livelihood development. By mitigating these gaps, the study provides insights for precise poverty alleviation, preventing the reoccurrence of poverty, and supporting sustainable development for farmers in impoverished regions.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the understanding of livelihood resilience by analyzing the factors influencing the adaptability and sustainability of poverty-stricken populations in relocated areas, which provides insights that are evidence-based to enhance rural revitalization and targeted poverty alleviation strategies.

1. Introduction

Relocation for poverty alleviation is an important measure of China's "13th Five Year Plan" to implement poverty alleviation and targeted poverty alleviation, aiming to

relocate and resettle rural impoverished populations in areas with harsh living environments, solve the development dilemma of "one land cannot support one people", improve the well-being of people in impoverished areas, and enable impoverished populations to share the fruits of development (NDRC, 2016). The term "relocation for poverty alleviation" is a unique term in China, which is essentially a systematic consideration of the relationship between the living environment, cost, and way of life of impoverished groups. It is a poverty alleviation method aimed at the impoverished population in areas where "one soil cannot support the other" for systematic and overall relocation (Cao et al., 2024). Since October 2015 Since General Secretary Xi Jinping first proposed the implementation of the "five batches" project of targeted poverty alleviation, "relocation" has become the most important means to solve the problem of "how to support". During the "Thirteenth Five-Year Plan" period, the Chinese government planned to relocate approximately 10 million people who are in deeply impoverished people from ecologically fragile and resource-scarce areas to regions with better living conditions (Wu & Yu, 2018). The ambitious initiative aimed to address development challenges and contribute to the nationwide goal of building a moderate prosperous society by 2020 (NDRC, 2016).

By November 23, 2020, Guizhou Province officially announced that all of its poverty-stricken countries had been removed from the national list, that signifies a significant milestone in China's poverty alleviation efforts. 832 poverty-stricken countries from the globe were lifted out of poverty, with more than 9.6 million registered impoverished individuals successfully relocated to new homes as part of the "Thirteenth Five-Year Plan" (Hu, Zhou & Xie, 2024). However, with the promotion and implementation of policies for poverty alleviation and relocation, some problems have gradually emerged. In these poverty alleviation and relocation areas, the livelihood restoration of farmers faces a series of challenges and difficulties. Therefore, by studying the resilience of farmers' livelihoods, the effectiveness and sustainability of relocation policies can be evaluated, providing a basis for the government to formulate more scientific and reasonable policies.

1.1. Research Objectives

- i. Deeply understand the concept and connotation of the livelihood restoration ability of farmers in poverty-stricken and relocated areas.
- ii. Analyze the influencing factors on the livelihood restoration ability of farmers in relocated poverty alleviation areas.
- iii. Explore the paths and strategies for improving the livelihood resilience of farmers in relocated poverty alleviation areas and provide feasible policy recommendations for government departments and relevant research institutions.

1.2. Research Questions

- i. What are the factors that affect resilience based on existing literature?
- ii. In the context of targeted poverty alleviation, what are the main challenges faced by relocated farmers in terms of resilience?
- iii. How to develop effective optimization strategies to enhance the resilience level of relocated farmers in Shanxi Province?

1.3. Research Significance

Relocation for poverty alleviation is an important measure in China's current poverty alleviation work, aimed at relocating farmers from impoverished areas to ecologically sound and resource rich areas, providing them with better living conditions and development opportunities. However, with the advancement of relocation policies, some problems have gradually emerged. In these poverty alleviation and relocation areas, the livelihood restoration of farmers faces a series of challenges and difficulties. Therefore, studying the livelihood restoration ability of farmers in relocated poverty alleviation areas is of great significance.

Firstly, research on the livelihood restoration ability of farmers in poverty alleviation and relocation areas can help to understand the implementation effect of relocation policies. Through studies on resilience of farmers' livelihoods, the effectiveness and sustainability of relocation policies can be evaluated, which provides a basis for government to formulate more scientific and reasonable policies. Understanding the livelihood resilience of farmers can help government and related departments to better understand the development needs for the relocation area, so that to further optimize resources and improve the adaptability of the relocation policies.

Secondly, the research on the livelihood restoration ability of farmers in poverty alleviation and relocation areas has great significance when it comes to promote sustainable rural development. The livelihood restoration ability of farmers not only related to farmers' individual survival and development, which also related to the stable development of the entire relocated area. Through studies of the livelihood resilience of farmers, it can be explored that the development path and model of rural economy in relocated areas, promotion of the transformation and upgrading of rural industrial structure, as well as the promotion of sustainable rural development.

Thirdly, research on the livelihood restoration ability of farmers in relocated poverty alleviation areas can help them to enhance their abilities to poverty alleviation and self-development. By analyzing the livelihood resilience of farmers, the insufficiencies and demands of farmers in terms of capital, skills, social networks, and other aspects can be discovered. By conducting targeted support and trainings to farmers, it helps enhancing their poverty alleviation and self-development abilities. Meanwhile, by studying the livelihood resilience of farmers, their needs in areas such as entrepreneurship, employment, education, and health can be identified, which can serve as a tool for governance.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Poverty Alleviation Relocation

Poverty Alleviation is rather a localized concept featured with Chinese characteristics, which is generally refer to the ecological migration or environmental migration in foreign countries (Lei et al., 2021). The starting points of relocation for poverty alleviation is to preserve ecological environment, maintaining the ecosystem's diversity, and getting rid of poverty (Shi et al., 2023; Wang & Zheng, 2024).

In 1983, the "Diaozhuang Immigration" initiative was introduced in China's "Three Wests" region (Dingxi and Hexi in Gansu, and Xihai in Ningxia), where severe water shortages

and poverty plagued local communities. The initiative marked the beginning of poverty alleviation through relocation in China (Wang & Zheng, 2024). On December 1, 2015, the State Council mobilized and deployed relocation programs under the “Thirteenth Five-Year Plan,” that further contributed to these efforts (NDRC, 2016). The “Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for Poverty Alleviation and Relocation Work,” released in December 2015, that outlined a five-year initiative to relocate registered impoverished populations from areas where “one side of the land cannot support one side of the people.” The goal was to relocate 10 million people during the initiative period, that enables them to achieve moderately prosperous society in aligning with the rest of the country (Koleski, 2017). The National Development and Reform Commission, along with other departments, issued the “Guiding Opinions on Consolidating and Expanding the Achievements of Poverty Alleviation,” that specifically focus on implementing follow-up support measures to sustain the progress made through poverty alleviation relocations (Li et al., 2022).

Relocation for poverty alleviation refers to the voluntary relocation of impoverished people living in areas with poor ecological environment, poor natural conditions, and high incidence of geological disasters, to areas with better living and production conditions under the unified organization of the government. In accordance with the principle of farmers' willingness, to carry out planned development style migration, and to cultivate barren mountains and wasteland suitable for agriculture and forestry, relying on urban and industrial development and relocation (Cao et al., 2024).

2.2. Resilience

In 1973, Holling (1973) first introduced resilience into ecological research, defining it as the ability of a system to absorb disturbances, undergo changes, and recombine without fundamentally changing its structure and function, providing a new perspective for understanding the constantly changing world (Holling, 1973). Subsequently, the concept of resilience gradually expanded to fields such as socio ecosystems, disaster prevention and reduction, tourism management, and farmer livelihoods. Most scholars have studied the resilience of livelihoods, combining the theory of resilience with livelihood research, focusing on the dynamic evolution process and mechanisms of livelihoods, emphasizing that farmers use limited resource endowments for livelihood adjustment and adaptation when facing external interference, providing theoretical basis and tool support for achieving sustainable livelihoods for farmers (Chen et al., 2023). Jin et al. (2024) studied the potential for rural revitalization in poverty-stricken mountainous areas of the Qinling Mountains from the perspective of resilience, Zou et al. (2019) studied the performance evaluation of relocation policies for poverty alleviation from the perspective of livelihood resilience, Yin et al. (2024) studied the spatiotemporal differentiation of ecosystem resilience, and (Li et al., 2018) studied the risk assessment and factor identification of rural households returning to poverty in tourist destinations from the perspective of livelihood resilience.

The resilience of this study refers to the construction of Songjiagou Central Village in Songjiagou Township to effectively improve the production and living conditions of impoverished people, promote the coordinated development of population, resources, and environment. By coordinating the construction of ecological environment, village style, architectural landscape, infrastructure, and other aspects, we strive to build Songjiagou Village into a demonstration village for the construction of new rural areas in Kelan County, characterized by agricultural and sideline product processing, new energy industry, and tourism services. Construction of poverty alleviation and immigration have

been undertaken, together with village appearance, infrastructure, and other aspects, truly achieving poverty alleviation and prosperity.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a literature review as its primary research method to systematically analyze and integrate existing studies, reports, and policy documents with relates to the relocation for poverty alleviation and livelihood resilience. The literature review is mainly focuses on three main areas, which are the conceptual framework of livelihood resilience, the impact of relocation policies on impoverished populations, and strategies to enhance farmers' resilience in relocated areas.

Important academic articles, government policy documents, and reports were selected from credible databases and institutional publications to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic. The selection criteria prioritized recent studies that address relocation policies, resilience frameworks, and socio-economic impacts, which makes sure that they are relevant to the study's objectives.

The theoretical framework, together with the resilience theory and livelihood development models, this report is aiming to evaluate farmers' capacity to adapt and recover in relocated areas. The study also uses secondary data from government statistical reports and policies evaluations to assess the policy outcomes.

The methodological approach provides the foundation for understanding the challenges faced by relocated farmers and for developing evidence-based recommendations for policy improvement. It makes sure that systematic analysis for livelihood resilience while addressing the gaps in current research.

4. Results

The livelihood restoration ability of farmers in poverty alleviation and relocation areas refers to the ability of affected farmers during the relocation process to quickly recover and improve their livelihood level in a new living environment (Zhang et al., 2023). There are multiple factors that affect the resilience of farmers' livelihoods, which can be analyzed from the following perspectives.

4.1. Spatial and Temporal Factors

The resilience of rural livelihoods is impacted by spatiotemporal factors, that mainly focuses on the evolution of livelihoods across times and geographic space (Yin et al., 2024). Temporally, the impacts of different stages of relocation and livelihood development are important. Spatially, geographic location, economic conditions, and cultural contexts influence the effectiveness of livelihood strategies (Jin et al., 2024). This approach can provide deeper insights into the interactions and transformations affecting rural livelihood resilience, that could support future policy design. Existing research has found that the degree of resilience is influenced by time and space. In the law of time transformation, resilience has a lag effect on poverty reduction, and there are differences in space. For example, Huang et al. (2023) focuses on evaluating the typical ecosystem services in the Dabie Mountain area and their application in improving residents' well-being. The study discusses the spatiotemporal evolution, spatial heterogeneity, and

coupling association patterns of ecosystem services and multidimensional well-being in Jinzhai County, that's where the core area of the Dabie Mountains is, from 2005 to 2020.

4.2. Environmental Factors

Environmental factors include natural and cultural environments. In terms of natural environment, the climate, soil quality, and utilization of natural resources in poverty alleviation and relocation areas will have a direct impact on the livelihood restoration ability of farmers (Liu et al., 2018). For example, in areas with good climate conditions and fertile soil, farmers have more opportunities to engage in agricultural production, and their livelihood recovery ability is relatively strong. In terms of cultural environment, including infrastructure construction, cultural education, and social security (The British Academy, 2024). Good infrastructure and cultural and educational conditions can provide more development opportunities and resources, which is beneficial for the livelihood recovery of farmers (Cohen & Bhatt, 2012). The quality of social security will directly affect the quality of life and livelihood restoration ability of farmers. Existing research has found that environmental factors play a central role in resilience, and the ecological environment has been identified as the main influencing factor on the resilience of social ecosystems (Sommerkorn et al., 2013). By engaging in disaster related relocation, it has negative impact on the resilience of household livelihoods. For example, in order to study the resilience of social ecosystems, Yin et al. (2024) discussed the resilience of social ecosystems in poverty-stricken areas and the importance of the impact of tourism development on resistance. They analyzed the challenges they faced with relates to quantitative distinguishing the impact of tourism and other factors' impact on the resilience of social ecosystems. The findings including that tourism development, human environment relations, and ecological environment are the main factors that impact the resilience of social ecosystems.

4.3. Social Factors

Social factors are also one important factor affecting the resilience of farmers' livelihoods. Social factors include aspects like social security system, educational resources, medical security, and social relationship network. Firstly, a comprehensive social security system can offer security to farmers' daily lives and employment, which has positive impact on their livelihood recovery. Secondly, the sufficiency of educational resources is also an important factor impacting famers' livelihoods resilience. Lack of educational resources could reduce farmers' competitiveness in job market and impact their ability to recover their livelihoods. Additionally, the comprehensiveness of medical security is critical for improving the physical health and livelihood recovery ability of farmers after their relocation. In addition, the establishment and development of social relationship networks, as well as the power of social support, are also positive in promoting the livelihood recovery of farmers. Government policies and systems also have significant impacts on the resilience of poverty alleviation. For example, He et al. (2023) analyzed the issue of livelihood resilience among poverty-stricken populations in the Chongqing M Reservoir Area. The study examined strategies for improving livelihood resilience under the framework of rural revitalization (He et al., 2023). The results showed that policy support and regional endowments have positive impact over livelihood resilience, while livelihood risks have negative impact.

5. Countermeasures

5.1. Strengthen Government Policy Support

Farmers in poverty alleviation and relocation need supportive policy from aspects like financial support, tax incentives, and land use policies. The government can improve financial funding and project support by formulating relevant policies, so that providing friendly policy environment to encourage and guide farmers to participate in industrial development, employment, and entrepreneurship activities.

5.2. Strengthen Industrial Support and Training

The construction of a social support system also values industrial development and farmer skills training. The government can organize professional teams to provide trainings related to agricultural technology and market development support, to help them improve productivity and market competitiveness. Additionally, it can also encourage participation from enterprises, farmer cooperatives and other parties, so that it could promote the industrial chain and the integration of industries among farmers, and further improve their income.

5.3. Strengthen the Construction of the Social Security System

Farmers in poverty alleviation and relocation areas need a more stable social security system to ensure their basic living needs. The government can increase the strength of social security policies, to provide basic social security support for farmers. Meanwhile, social organizations and enterprises can also be encouraged to participate in the construction of the social security system to form a social security model that's rather diversified.

5.4. Strengthen the Integration and Coordination of Social Resources

The construction of a social support system requires the participation and cooperation of all relevant parties. The government can integrate resources, so that to strengthen cooperation with social organizations, enterprises, and farmer cooperatives, and forming a working pattern of resource sharing. Meanwhile, it can also encourage cooperation and communication among farmers, promote effective use of resources, and facilitate mutual cooperation among farmers.

5.5. Strengthen Social and Cultural Construction

Farmers in poverty alleviation and relocation areas are facing changes and adaptations in their social and cultural environment. The construction of a social support system also needs focus on social and cultural construction, which includes strengthening social and cultural education, improving the cultural quality of farmers, and spreading positive and upward values. The government can increase investment and support in cultural undertakings, guide and cultivate a good social and cultural atmosphere, and provide farmers with a good social environment and development space.

6. Conclusion

This study assesses the resilience of farmers' livelihoods before and after relocation for poverty alleviation, which specifically discusses the challenges, influencing factors, and strategies for improving livelihood sustainability. With the review on existing literature and analyze government reports and policy evaluations, the study's objective is to provide insights into the poverty alleviation work and its complexities, as well as how resilience can improve the welfare of relocated populations.

The research findings have shown that although relocation initiatives have made significant progress in improving material conditions of relocated farmers, true poverty alleviation requires more than just physical relocation. The key to make sure that farmers can adapt to new environments, overcome shocks, and sustain their livelihoods over time is to build livelihood resilience. Factors like acquiring land, employment opportunities, social networks, and government supports are also important for the success of these initiatives. The study highlights the need to have a comprehensive support system that go beyond material resources, with the specific focus on enhancing the development of human capital, social capital, and local community.

Rather than the contributes that this study intended to make, the research has shown some limitations. First, it relies heavily on the secondary data and literature, in which those sources may not fully reflect the comprehensive experiences of relocated farmers. Without primary data collection, the study cannot provide a complete picture of how different groups of farmers are affected by relocation policies. Secondly, the study mainly focuses on theoretical frameworks, which lacks assessment on detailed and specific area related factors of the relocation outcomes. Future research could be more comprehensive in views if it uses more empirical data that involves data collected from interviews, surveys, and fieldwork to assess the living experiences of relocated farmers.

Based on the research findings, firstly, the policymakers should prioritize on integrating strategies that address both material and non-material aspects of the livelihood resilience. Also, a more localized approach should be adopted to alleviate poverty, so that interventions should be tailored to the specific needs of relocated populations. Lastly, future research should discuss the long-term effects of relocation on farmers' social and economic well-being to better inform policy adjustments.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

Not applicable.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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