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Reframing Sustainable Livelihoods through the Resource-Based View: A Critical Review and Future Research Agenda

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Abstract: This article critically reframes sustainable livelihoods through the Resource-Based View to advance a more dynamic and theoretically grounded understanding of livelihood sustainability. While the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework has long emphasized livelihood capitals and vulnerability contexts, its conventional formulation often treats resources as static assets rather than as dynamic bundles that must be accessed, converted, combined, governed, and renewed over time. Using a critical and integrative review design informed by systematic review principles, this study synthesizes recent literature on sustainable livelihoods, livelihood capitals, resource orchestration, stakeholder governance, green innovation, and dynamic capabilities. The review shows that livelihood sustainability depends not merely on the possession of human, social, natural, physical, and financial capital, but on the capability to transform these capitals into resilience, adaptive capacity, ecological stewardship, social inclusion, and long-term well-being. The article contributes by repositioning livelihood capitals as strategic resource bundles embedded in social, ecological, and institutional systems. It further proposes a future research agenda focused on resource conversion capabilities, multi-level resource orchestration, inclusive governance, and the changing value of livelihood resources under climate, market, and institutional uncertainty. This reframing offers a stronger conceptual foundation for designing livelihood interventions that are capability-building, equity-oriented, and sustainability-driven.

Keywords: Sustainable Livelihoods, Resource-Based View, Livelihood Capitals, Resource Orchestration, Future Research Agenda

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable livelihoods research has increasingly moved beyond a narrow concern with income generation toward a broader understanding of how households, communities, and local enterprises mobilize capitals, capabilities, institutions, and social relations to sustain well-being under conditions of uncertainty. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework remains influential because it offers a multidimensional vocabulary for examining how human, social, natural,

physical, and financial resources are accessed, combined, transformed, and constrained by vulnerability contexts and institutional arrangements. Recent scholarship argues that this framework continues to be analytically relevant, yet must be reformulated for a world characterized by climate volatility, market instability, migration, digital transformation, ecological degradation, and uneven governance (Morse, 2025; Natarajan et al., 2022). In this regard, sustainable livelihoods are not merely the outcome of asset ownership, but the product of dynamic interactions between resource endowments, social agency, institutional mediation, and environmental limits.

Recent empirical and review-based studies reinforce the urgency of revisiting livelihood theory. In South Asia and Africa, rural livelihood sustainability has been shaped by recurring pressures related to climate change, drought, poverty, food insecurity, and limited livelihood diversification, indicating that livelihood systems are increasingly exposed to multiple and interacting stressors (Albugami et al., 2024; Der Tambile et al., 2024). Similar evidence from climate adaptation research shows that livelihood responses cannot be generalized across places because adaptation strategies depend on agroecological zones, governance conditions, social structures, and local resource configurations (Hamer et al., 2025). At the same time, studies have shown that livelihood capitals produce different outcomes depending on their quality, productivity, relational embeddedness, and regional context, suggesting that the mere presence of capitals does not automatically translate into sustainable livelihood outcomes (Du et al., 2025; Kunjuraman, 2023). These findings indicate a growing scholarly consensus that sustainable livelihoods should be examined as complex, situated, and resource-dependent systems rather than as static inventories of household assets.

In parallel, the Resource-Based View has developed as a major theoretical lens for explaining how resources and capabilities become sources of durable value creation. Contemporary RBV scholarship has expanded beyond its traditional firm-centered focus by incorporating sustainability, green innovation, stakeholder collaboration, and dynamic capabilities into the analysis of resource advantage (Correggi et al., 2024; Ferreira & Ferreira, 2025; Khanra et al., 2022). Green innovation studies, for example, show that environmentally oriented knowledge, technologies, and routines can operate as strategic resources when they enable organizations to reconcile economic value creation with ecological responsibility (Khanra et al., 2022). Likewise, research integrating RBV with stakeholder theory demonstrates that collaborative innovation depends not only on internal resources, but also on heterogeneous stakeholder relationships, knowledge diversity, and inter-organizational resource recombination (Ozdemir et al., 2023). These developments make RBV increasingly relevant for sustainable livelihood scholarship because livelihood systems also depend on the strategic mobilization, orchestration, and renewal of tangible and intangible resources.

Despite these conceptual affinities, sustainable livelihood studies and RBV-oriented research have largely evolved in separate theoretical traditions. Sustainable livelihood research tends to emphasize vulnerability, access, and asset portfolios, while RBV tends to emphasize resource heterogeneity, capability formation, value creation, and strategic advantage. This separation creates an important analytical gap. The livelihood literature often explains what types of capital households or communities possess, but provides less theoretical precision regarding why some capitals become transformative, why others remain underutilized, and how resource combinations generate resilience, adaptation, or long-term sustainability. Recent reviews show that even community-based vulnerability assessments using livelihood frameworks often remain insufficiently integrated across spatial, temporal, and multiple-exposure dimensions, limiting their capacity to explain how livelihood systems evolve under overlapping shocks (Smith & Diedrich, 2024).

Conversely, RBV offers a sophisticated vocabulary for examining valuable, difficult-to-replicate, and capability-enhancing resources, yet it remains strongly associated with firms, competitive advantage, and managerial value capture. Applying RBV uncritically to livelihood

contexts would risk reducing communities, households, and marginalized groups to market actors whose resources are evaluated primarily in terms of productivity or competitiveness. Such a move would be theoretically incomplete and normatively problematic because sustainable livelihoods are embedded in social reproduction, ecological stewardship, cultural continuity, gender relations, and institutional justice. Recent studies on gender and social inclusion in livelihood interventions demonstrate that livelihood resources must be evaluated through questions of participation, social protection, community accountability, and the prevention of exclusionary outcomes (Idrus et al., 2025). Therefore, the challenge is not simply to import RBV into livelihood studies, but to critically reframe RBV so that it can explain resource transformation while remaining attentive to vulnerability, equity, environmental limits, and social agency.

This complication is particularly evident in research on livelihood adaptation and resilience. Studies increasingly recognize that communities require not only assets, but also capabilities to sense threats, mobilize resources, learn collectively, collaborate with stakeholders, and reconfigure livelihood strategies in response to environmental and socio-economic disruptions (Bhadra et al., 2024; Correggi et al., 2024; Hamer et al., 2025). However, sustainable livelihood research has not yet developed a coherent theoretical account of these processes as resource-based mechanisms. As a result, the literature risks remaining descriptive, fragmented, and sector-specific. It can identify that human capital, land, technology, social networks, institutions, or cultural resources matter, but it does not always explain how these resources become strategic, how they interact, how they are governed, or how their value changes under crisis conditions.

The central concern addressed in this article is that sustainable livelihood scholarship may continue to reproduce a form of asset accounting without adequately theorizing resource conversion, capability formation, and strategic resource orchestration. In many livelihood studies, capitals are treated as measurable inputs that influence livelihood outcomes, but less attention is given to the mechanisms through which capitals are activated, combined, protected, renewed, or transformed across time. This is a serious limitation because two households or communities may possess similar livelihood capitals yet experience very different outcomes due to differences in knowledge, governance, social networks, collective action, market access, institutional support, or adaptive capacity. Recent evidence that livelihood capital effects vary across regions and outcome types confirms the need to move beyond capital possession toward capital productivity, complementarity, and conversion capability (Du et al., 2025).

At the same time, the article is concerned with the normative risk of translating RBV into livelihood analysis without critique. RBV can illuminate why certain resources generate durable value, yet its conventional emphasis on advantage must be reinterpreted in livelihood contexts where the goal is not superior competition, but sustainable well-being, resilience, dignity, ecological continuity, and equitable participation. Natarajan et al. (2022) argue that the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework must be reworked to address the political and structural conditions that shape access, agency, and vulnerability. This implies that a resource-based reframing of livelihoods must not merely ask which resources are valuable, but also for whom they are valuable, who controls them, how they are governed, whose capabilities are strengthened, and whether their use reproduces or reduces inequality. Stakeholder-based RBV research provides a useful bridge here because it recognizes that value creation is relational and depends on diverse actors, knowledge flows, and collaborative arrangements rather than isolated ownership of resources (Ozdemir et al., 2023).

This concern becomes more pressing under contemporary sustainability transitions. Climate change, environmental degradation, technological disruption, and volatile markets alter the value of livelihood resources over time. Land, labor, traditional knowledge, social networks, digital access, ecological assets, and institutional ties may gain or lose strategic importance depending on changing risk environments. A livelihood resource that is productive under stable

conditions may become fragile under drought, flood, displacement, or market exclusion. Therefore, sustainable livelihood research needs a theoretical lens capable of explaining not only resource access, but also resource dynamism, resource vulnerability, and resource renewal. RBV, when critically adapted, can contribute to this need by shifting the analysis from static livelihood capital inventories to dynamic resource portfolios embedded in social, ecological, and institutional systems.

This article responds to the above gap by conducting a critical review that reframes sustainable livelihoods through the Resource-Based View. Rather than treating SLF and RBV as separate frameworks, the review positions livelihood capitals as resource bundles whose sustainability depends on value creation, convertibility, complementarity, embeddedness, governance, and adaptive renewal. The proposed reframing examines five interrelated analytical domains: resource endowments, resource conversion capabilities, resource orchestration, stakeholder and institutional governance, and sustainable livelihood outcomes. Resource endowments refer to the tangible and intangible capital available to households, communities, and livelihood-based enterprises. Resource conversion capabilities refer to the skills, routines, knowledge, and agency through which these capitals are transformed into income, resilience, food security, autonomy, and well-being. Resource orchestration refers to the capacity to combine, sequence, protect, and reconfigure resources across changing vulnerability contexts. Stakeholder and institutional governance refer to the rules, relationships, power structures, and collective arrangements that shape who can access, use, and benefit from livelihood resources. Sustainable livelihood outcomes refer not only to income and consumption, but also to resilience, ecological stewardship, social inclusion, adaptive capacity, and intergenerational sustainability.

The review further develops a future research agenda organized around several critical questions. First, future studies should examine what makes livelihood capitals strategically valuable under different ecological, economic, and institutional conditions. Second, research should investigate how households and communities convert resources into capabilities, especially in contexts of poverty, informality, and climate vulnerability. Third, scholars should examine how social networks, cooperatives, local institutions, digital platforms, and stakeholder collaborations shape the orchestration of livelihood resources. Fourth, future work should integrate dynamic capabilities into livelihood analysis by studying how communities sense threats, seize opportunities, and reconfigure livelihood strategies under uncertainty (Bhadra et al., 2024; Correggi et al., 2024). Fifth, sustainable livelihood research should develop more explicit equity-sensitive and gender-responsive models that recognize how resource access and resource benefits are unequally distributed across class, gender, age, ethnicity, and geography (Idrus et al., 2025). Through these directions, the article advances a resource-based research program that is theoretically rigorous, empirically grounded, and normatively aligned with sustainability.

This article contributes to the literature in four main ways. First, it offers a theoretical contribution by integrating sustainable livelihood thinking with RBV. It argues that livelihood capitals should not be understood merely as assets possessed by households or communities, but as strategic resource bundles whose value depends on their quality, complementarity, convertibility, relational embeddedness, and capacity for renewal. This reframing helps explain why similar livelihood capital profiles may generate divergent outcomes across places and groups. It also extends RBV beyond its conventional firm-centered orientation by repositioning resource advantage as livelihood resilience, adaptive capacity, social inclusion, and ecological sustainability rather than competitive superiority alone.

Second, the article contributes conceptually by developing a critical vocabulary for analyzing livelihood resource orchestration. Existing livelihood studies often identify capitals and vulnerability contexts, but they do not always theorize the mechanisms through which resources are mobilized, combined, protected, and transformed. By drawing on recent RBV,

stakeholder collaboration, green innovation, and dynamic capability scholarship, this review proposes that sustainable livelihoods depend on the interaction between resource ownership, resource access, resource agency, and resource governance (Ferreira & Ferreira, 2025; Khanra et al., 2022; Ozdemir et al., 2023). This approach allows livelihood research to examine not only whether people have resources, but whether they can strategically use those resources to sustain well-being under changing conditions.

Third, the article contributes methodologically by proposing a future research agenda that encourages longitudinal, multi-level, comparative, and mixed-method designs. The literature needs studies that trace how livelihood resources change over time, how capitals interact across household, community, market, and institutional levels, and how external shocks reconfigure the strategic value of resources. This responds directly to the limitations identified in recent vulnerability and adaptation reviews, especially the need for less siloed approaches that account for spatial interaction, temporal change, and multiple exposures (Hamer et al., 2025; Smith & Diedrich, 2024). A resource-based reframing can therefore strengthen both explanatory depth and methodological integration in sustainable livelihood research.

Fourth, the article provides practical and policy-oriented contributions. If sustainable livelihoods are understood through RBV, interventions should move beyond distributing assets or increasing access to isolated forms of capital. Policy should instead strengthen the capabilities through which households and communities combine resources, build knowledge, collaborate with stakeholders, govern common resources, and adapt to environmental and economic change. This implies that livelihood programs should prioritize capability development, institutional support, collective resource governance, digital and technological inclusion, ecological restoration, and gender-sensitive participation. In this way, reframing sustainable livelihoods through RBV provides a robust foundation for designing livelihood interventions that are not only asset-enhancing but also capability-building, equity-oriented, and sustainability-driven.

METHOD

REVIEW DESIGN

This article employed a critical and integrative review design informed by systematic review principles. This design was selected because the purpose of the study was not to estimate effect sizes, aggregate statistically comparable findings, or test causal relationships across homogeneous studies, but to interrogate how sustainable livelihoods research conceptualizes resources, capabilities, vulnerability, and sustainability, and to develop a theory-driven reframing through the Resource-Based View. Review research is increasingly recognized as a legitimate form of scientific inquiry when prior studies are treated as data and are analyzed through explicit procedures to generate conceptual, theoretical, and practical contributions (Kunisch et al., 2023). Accordingly, the present review combined transparent search, screening, and coding procedures with an interpretive synthesis oriented toward theory development, following recent calls for literature reviews to demonstrate rigour, generativity, scope, and transparency (Fan et al., 2022; Kraus et al., 2022). The review was therefore positioned as a critical review with systematic search logic, rather than as a purely narrative review or a full systematic review focused on exhaustive aggregation.

The critical orientation of the review was necessary because both sustainable livelihoods scholarship and RBV scholarship contain assumptions that require conceptual examination. Sustainable livelihood studies frequently emphasize assets, capitals, and vulnerability contexts, while RBV research emphasizes resource heterogeneity, value creation, resource orchestration, and strategic advantage. Recent livelihood scholarship has called for the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework to be reformulated for contemporary conditions marked by climate change, institutional instability, social differentiation, and uneven development (Natarajan et al., 2022). At the same time, recent RBV scholarship has mapped the expansion of the field

beyond traditional competitive advantage toward innovation, sustainability, stakeholder relations, and dynamic capabilities (Ferreira & Ferreira, 2025; Khanra et al., 2022). This review, therefore, used critical synthesis to examine how these two bodies of literature can be productively connected, where their assumptions converge, where they remain in tension, and how their integration can produce a future research agenda for sustainable livelihood studies.

Review Questions And Analytical Scope

The review was guided by three interrelated questions. First, how has recent sustainable livelihoods research conceptualized livelihood resources, capitals, capabilities, and outcomes? Second, how can the Resource-Based View help explain why certain livelihood resources become valuable, adaptive, resilient, and sustainability-enhancing, while others remain fragile, underutilized, or exclusionary? Third, what future research agenda emerges when sustainable livelihoods are reframed as dynamic resource systems rather than as static asset portfolios? These questions are consistent with recent methodological guidance suggesting that high-quality review research should align its purpose, scope, sampling decisions, synthesis strategy, and contribution logic (Kunisch et al., 2023; Sauer & Seuring, 2023). They also reflect the need for systematicity, understood not as mechanical proceduralism, but as a transparent and coherent orientation toward coverage, connectedness, saturation, and theoretical fit (Simsek et al., 2023).

The analytical scope covered recent peer-reviewed literature published between January 2022 and May 2026. This time frame was chosen to satisfy the article's contemporary focus and to capture recent developments in livelihood sustainability, climate adaptation, resource-based theorizing, green innovation, stakeholder collaboration, and sustainability-oriented dynamic capabilities. Earlier foundational works on sustainable livelihoods and RBV were treated only as conceptual background where necessary, while the primary corpus and cited evidence were restricted to recent publications. This temporal boundary was especially important because recent reviews indicate that livelihood research has increasingly shifted toward resilience, climate change, food security, rural transformation, and social inclusion (Der Tambile et al., 2024; Smith & Diedrich, 2024). Similarly, recent RBV-related studies have increasingly examined sustainability, collaborative innovation, and dynamic capabilities as resource-based mechanisms rather than treating resources only as sources of firm-level advantage (Correggi et al., 2024; Ozdemir et al., 2023).

Search Strategy

The literature search was designed to capture studies located at the intersection of sustainable livelihoods, livelihood capitals, resource-based theorizing, sustainability, and adaptive capabilities. Scopus and Web of Science Core Collection were used as the primary databases because they provide broad coverage of high-quality peer-reviewed research across development studies, sustainability science, management, organization studies, environmental studies, and social sciences. These databases were complemented by targeted searches in ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Wiley Online Library, Emerald Insight, and Taylor & Francis Online to identify recently published articles that may not have been captured through the initial database search. This multi-source strategy follows recent methodological guidance that literature sampling in review studies should be transparent, sequenced, and reproducible, while avoiding excessive dependence on a single database or undocumented search pathway (Gusenbauer & Gauster, 2025; Hiebl, 2023).

The search strings combined three clusters of terms. The first cluster captured the sustainable livelihoods domain through terms such as "sustainable livelihood*," "livelihood capital*," "livelihood resilience," "livelihood adaptation," "rural livelihood*," "community livelihood*," and "livelihood diversification." The second cluster captured RBV-related and capability-oriented concepts through terms such as "resource-based view," "RBV," "resource

orchestration,” “strategic resource*,” “resource mobilization,” “dynamic capability*,” “resource heterogeneity,” and “resource configuration.” The third cluster captured sustainability and vulnerability-related contexts through terms such as “sustainab*,” “climate adaptation,” “resilien*,” “green innovation,” “stakeholder collaboration,” “social inclusion,” “institutional governance,” and “social-ecological system*.” Search terms were combined using Boolean operators and adapted to the syntax requirements of each database. Citation chaining was also conducted by examining the reference lists and citing articles of highly relevant review articles and conceptual contributions, especially those addressing reformulations of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, systematic reviews of livelihood sustainability, vulnerability assessment, RBV mapping, and sustainability-oriented dynamic capabilities (Correggi et al., 2024; Der Tambile et al., 2024; Ferreira & Ferreira, 2025; Natarajan et al., 2022; Smith & Diedrich, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The critical synthesis indicates that sustainable livelihoods should be reframed from a static asset portfolio into a dynamic resource system. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework remains valuable because it captures the multidimensionality of livelihoods, but recent scholarship shows that its conventional treatment of livelihood capitals is insufficient for explaining contemporary disruptions. Natarajan et al. (2022) argue that the framework must become more structural, spatially differentiated, dynamic, and ecologically coherent, while Morse (2025) emphasizes that the Sustainable Livelihood Approach still requires stronger theoretical grounding and practical refinement. This review therefore finds that livelihood capitals should not be interpreted merely as resources owned by households or communities, but as resource bundles whose value depends on quality, convertibility, complementarity, governance, and contextual relevance. This interpretation is consistent with Kunjuraman (2023), who shows that socio-cultural capital can expand the conventional livelihood capital model in community-based tourism contexts.

A central finding is that livelihood sustainability depends less on resource possession than on resource conversion capability. Recent empirical evidence shows that the effects of livelihood capitals are uneven across capital types, income sources, and regions. Du et al. (2025), for instance, find that land and human capital are the most important determinants of expenditure-based livelihood outcomes among peasant households in China, while land and technology are more influential for farm income, indicating that livelihood capital effects are not uniform. Similarly, Ma et al. (2024) show that social, physical, and financial capital strengthen livelihood resilience among resettled rural households, while human capital contributes indirectly through coping behavior. These findings support an RBV-informed interpretation that resources generate sustainable outcomes only when they are activated through skills, routines, learning, adaptive behavior, and institutional support. Thus, sustainable livelihoods require not only access to assets, but also the capability to transform those assets into income security, adaptive capacity, dignity, and long-term well-being.

The review also finds that vulnerability contexts change the strategic value of livelihood resources. Climate change, drought, poverty, food insecurity, market instability, and ecological degradation increasingly determine whether a given resource becomes enabling, fragile, or obsolete. Der Tambile et al. (2024) show that climate change, drought, poverty, and food security dominate rural livelihood sustainability research in South Asia and Africa, while Albugami et al. (2024) demonstrate that research on climate change and sustainable livelihoods in South Asia has expanded substantially and is increasingly focused on adaptation, vulnerability, and sustainability. Hamer et al. (2025) further show that livelihood adaptation in agroecological zones is constrained by weak stakeholder engagement, inconsistent policies, environmental degradation, and technological deficiencies. In this respect, the RBV adds explanatory value by asking how resource value changes under uncertainty, while livelihood

theory adds normative depth by asking whether resource use reduces vulnerability or reproduces exposure to future shocks.

The discussion suggests that the Resource-Based View can strengthen sustainable livelihood analysis when it is critically adapted rather than directly imported. Conventional RBV emphasizes valuable, rare, difficult-to-imitate, and organizationally embedded resources, but livelihood contexts require a broader interpretation of value. In sustainable livelihoods, a resource is strategic not because it produces competitive advantage, but because it supports resilience, adaptation, ecological stewardship, social inclusion, and intergenerational well-being. Recent RBV research already moves in this direction. Khanra et al. (2022) conceptualize green innovation as a strategic resource that can support both competitive advantage and sustainable development, while Ferreira and Ferreira (2025) map the expansion of RBV research toward broader future trends. Andersén (2023) develops green resource orchestration to explain how resources can be structured, bundled, and leveraged for economic and environmental benefits, and Carton and Parigot (2024) extend this logic through an ecological resource orchestration model for natural resource preservation. These studies provide a theoretical basis for reframing livelihood capitals as strategic, relational, and sustainability-oriented resource configurations.

Another important result is that livelihood resources are institutionally and relationally embedded. Access to land, finance, technology, knowledge, markets, ecosystems, and social networks is mediated by governance structures, power relations, gender norms, stakeholder coordination, and local institutions. Ozdemir et al. (2023) show that stakeholder diversity can shape collaborative innovation because different stakeholders provide distinct motives, knowledge, and information sources. Idrus et al. (2025) similarly demonstrate that a sustainable livelihood approach combined with gender and social inclusion can reveal how social, natural, financial, and human capitals may be mobilized for community-based prevention and remediation systems. This implies that livelihood resources are not neutral inputs. Their value depends on who controls them, who can access them, who benefits from them, and whether institutional arrangements enable or constrain inclusive use. Therefore, an RBV-informed livelihood framework must incorporate power, participation, social accountability, and equity as core analytical dimensions.

The synthesis further indicates that sustainable livelihood outcomes should be expanded beyond income and asset accumulation. Income remains important, but it is insufficient as a final indicator of livelihood sustainability. A livelihood may generate income while degrading ecosystems, increasing gendered labor burdens, weakening social relations, or deepening dependence on unstable markets. Smith and Diedrich (2024) show that community-based vulnerability assessments still need less siloed approaches that account for spatial interaction, temporal change, and multiple exposures. This finding supports the argument that livelihood outcomes should include resilience, adaptive capacity, ecological integrity, social inclusion, autonomy, reduced exposure to risk, and the ability to sustain future options. From an RBV perspective, this means that the value of a livelihood resource should be judged not only by its immediate economic yield, but also by its capacity to preserve or enhance the resource base on which future livelihoods depend.

The results support an integrated conceptual model consisting of five interrelated domains: resource endowments, resource conversion capabilities, resource orchestration, stakeholder and institutional governance, and sustainable livelihood outcomes. Resource endowments refer to tangible and intangible livelihood capitals, including human, social, natural, physical, financial, technological, institutional, cultural, and relational resources. Resource conversion capabilities explain how these capitals are transformed into livelihood strategies and outcomes. Resource orchestration captures the processes through which households, communities, cooperatives, firms, and institutions structure, bundle, protect, and reconfigure resources under changing conditions. Stakeholder and institutional governance

explain the rules, relationships, and power structures that shape access and benefit distribution. Sustainable livelihood outcomes refer to economic, social, ecological, and adaptive achievements. This model reframes sustainable livelihoods as dynamic resource systems rather than static capital inventories.

The theoretical implication is that RBV can move sustainable livelihood research from asset description to mechanism explanation. Existing livelihood studies often identify which forms of capital exist, but they less frequently explain why some capitals become transformative while others remain dormant or exclusionary. RBV helps fill this gap by focusing attention on resource heterogeneity, complementarity, conversion, and orchestration. However, the discussion also shows that RBV must be normatively reconstructed for livelihood contexts. The goal is not competitive superiority, but sustainable capability. The relevant question is not merely whether a resource is valuable, but whether it is livelihood-enhancing, socially inclusive, ecologically viable, and institutionally accessible. Correggi et al. (2024) argue that sustainability-oriented dynamic capabilities require attention to new micro-foundations, inter-organizational levels of analysis, and the understudied social dimension, while Bhadra et al. (2024) show that dynamic sustainability capability is connected to relational and managerial capabilities in sustainability performance.

The future research agenda should therefore prioritize four directions. First, future studies should investigate how livelihood capitals become strategic under specific ecological, institutional, and market conditions. Second, research should examine the mechanisms of resource conversion, especially learning, coping behavior, technology adoption, collective action, and institutional brokerage. Third, scholars should analyze resource orchestration at multiple levels, including households, communities, cooperatives, local governments, value chains, and social-ecological systems. Fourth, future work should examine the equity consequences of resource-based livelihood interventions, particularly for women, youth, Indigenous groups, migrant households, and informal workers. Methodologically, this agenda calls for longitudinal designs, configurational approaches, participatory methods, comparative case studies, and mixed-method research capable of tracing how resource value changes over time. In this way, reframing sustainable livelihoods through RBV provides a stronger foundation for explaining, designing, and evaluating livelihood systems that are resilient, inclusive, and ecologically sustainable.

CONCLUSION

This article concludes that sustainable livelihoods can be more rigorously understood when reframed through the Resource-Based View. The critical review shows that livelihood sustainability is not determined merely by the possession of human, social, natural, physical, or financial capital, but by the extent to which these capitals can be converted, combined, governed, and renewed under changing vulnerability contexts. By integrating the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework with resource-based theorizing, the article advances a more dynamic explanation of how households, communities, cooperatives, institutions, and livelihood-based enterprises transform available resources into resilience, adaptive capacity, ecological responsibility, social inclusion, and long-term well-being. This reframing responds directly to the article's objective of moving sustainable livelihood analysis beyond static asset accounting toward a more explanatory and theoretically grounded model of resource conversion and orchestration.

The main contribution of the article lies in repositioning livelihood capitals as strategic resource bundles whose value depends on quality, complementarity, accessibility, institutional embeddedness, and adaptive renewal. In this perspective, the Resource-Based View does not simply provide a managerial theory of competitive advantage, but becomes a critical analytical lens for explaining why similar livelihood resources may produce different outcomes across social, ecological, and institutional contexts. The article therefore contributes to sustainable

livelihood scholarship by clarifying the mechanisms through which resources become livelihood-enhancing, vulnerability-reducing, and sustainability-oriented. It also extends resource-based theory by shifting its emphasis from firm-level superiority to sustainable capability, inclusive resource governance, and ecological continuity.

Practically, this review implies that livelihood interventions should move beyond the distribution of isolated assets and focus more explicitly on strengthening resource conversion capabilities, collective learning, institutional support, stakeholder collaboration, digital and technological inclusion, and gender-sensitive participation. Policies aimed at sustainable livelihoods should therefore be designed not only to increase access to resources, but also to improve the capacity of people and communities to mobilize, protect, recombine, and renew those resources over time. Such an approach is particularly important in contexts shaped by climate change, market volatility, ecological degradation, poverty, and social inequality.

Future research should build on this reframing by examining how livelihood resources become strategic under different ecological, economic, cultural, and institutional conditions. Longitudinal, comparative, participatory, and mixed-method studies are needed to trace how resource value changes over time and how resource orchestration operates across household, community, organizational, and social-ecological levels. Overall, this article provides a stronger conceptual foundation for developing sustainable livelihood research that is theoretically robust, empirically sensitive, and practically relevant for advancing resilience, inclusion, and sustainability in complex livelihood systems..

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