



THE INTERSECTION OF RURAL COMMUNITY WELL-BEING AND PUBLIC INTEREST: A THEMATIC STUDY

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Abstract

This mixed-methods study sought to understand rural residents' perceptions and experiences of the primary elements affecting community wellbeing. The study seeks to uncover and explain the economic, social, institutional, environmental, and other factors that rural community members believe most affect their communities' wellbeing. The survey sought to discover rural community members' top priorities for community wellbeing. An integrative mixed-methods study of this important rural development and policy issue was possible by giving rural residents' lived experiences a voice through qualitative methods and measuring variables through the survey. The study used contemporaneous triangulation and mixed methodologies. An inductive study using 25 semi-structured interviews and a survey technique collected 400 rural respondents for the qualitative component. The interviews were thematically analyzed inductively to identify important themes. The survey instrument implemented and quantified exploratory factor analysis identified community wellbeing factors. To find determinants, descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were used on quantitative data. A mixed-methods approach triangulated qualitative and quantitative findings to build a coherent understanding. Social cohesion, community cohesion, community infrastructure assessment, community support, environmental amenities, sustainable local government, and safety were major themes. The poll found a favourable correlation between perceived safety, sustainable local governance, community infrastructure evaluation, and community cohesion. Environmental amenities, community cohesion, and support boost social cohesion. Quantitative and qualitative data showed that rural community wellbeing is complicated and multifaceted, resulting from economic, social, institutional, and environmental aspects. This research reveals the relative importance and interrelationships of key determinants like social cohesion, environmental amenities, community infrastructure, and sustainable local governance, providing a framework for developing rural community-specific interventions and strategies.

Keywords: Rural communities, Mixed - method study, Triangulation, Thematic analysis, Rural policy.

INTRODUCTION

Community wellbeing is a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses various aspects of health, prosperity, and quality of life. It encompasses a broad range of factors that contribute to the health, prosperity, and overall quality of life of the people where they live (Diener et al., 1999). It goes beyond traditional measures of economic growth to include aspects such as access to healthcare, education, social services, environmental quality, and community engagement (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004). In rural areas, where resources may be limited and challenges such as isolation, poverty, and inadequate infrastructure are more pronounced, promoting wellbeing requires a holistic approach that addresses the diverse needs and aspirations of community members (Dr. Brenda Murphy, 2010). By addressing the diverse needs and challenges faced by the rural population and promoting access to essential services, education, social support, and environmental protection. The imperative for action in this realm is both compelling and urgent, demanding concerted efforts to uplift and sustain their wellbeing towards building stronger, more resilient rural communities where all members can thrive. The literature robustly underpins specific key determinants, illuminating the path toward a nuanced understanding of these critical aspects. In rural areas, community wellbeing and social cohesion are deeply intertwined, forming the backbone of these close-knit societies. Social services, including social support networks, community organizations, and government programs, play



a vital role in rural community wellbeing. These services can help address social and economic challenges, provide a safety net for vulnerable populations, and promote social cohesion and inclusion. Strengthening social services in rural areas can help build resilience and improve overall wellbeing. The fabric of rural life is woven with strong social bonds, built on a foundation of shared experiences, traditions, and mutual support (Cassidy & Barnes, 2012). These communities often exhibit high levels of social capital, where neighbours know each other by name and are willing to lend a helping hand in times of need. This sense of interconnectedness extends beyond individual relationships to encompass the entire community, creating a collective identity that is deeply rooted in the local landscape. Social cohesion in rural areas is not just about the absence of conflict; it is about the presence of strong, positive relationships that bind individuals together (Rockenbauch & Sakdapolrak, 2017). These relationships are cultivated by frequent interactions, such as community events, volunteer activities, and informal meetings. They offer a feeling of inclusion and protection, which are crucial for personal wellbeing. The natural environment is directly interconnected with the overall wellbeing of rural communities. Environmental conservation is a shared priority for many rural communities that depend on the land for their livelihoods. The common bond with the land cultivates a feeling of guardianship and duty, resulting in collaborative endeavors to conserve and safeguard the nearby surroundings (Kaseje et al., 2024). Rural living relies on community wellbeing and social cohesion, which are essential for fostering a sense of purpose, belonging, and security. These communities exemplify the significance of robust social connections in fostering prosperous and resilient societies. The rural communities' environment not only determines their physical surroundings but also impacts their social connections and support networks, highlighting the interdependence between environmental health and community wellbeing in rural settings. Rural community wellbeing is significantly influenced by environmental quality (Johansen et al., 2012). Rural areas are often home to natural resources such as clean air, water, and land, which are essential for health and wellbeing (McCrea et al., 2019). However, rural communities may also face environmental challenges such as pollution, deforestation, and climate change, which can negatively impact health and quality of life (Shaikh et al., 2024). Protecting and preserving the environment is crucial for promoting wellbeing in rural areas. A thriving community is not only socially and economically prosperous but also environmentally sustainable (Slemp et al., 2012). In turn, communities have a responsibility to steward these resources responsibly to ensure their long-term availability for the rural populace (Bhagat et al., 2024). Many studies support prioritizing environmental conservation and sustainability, not only for the protection of their wellbeing but also to contribute to the broader health of the planet. Additionally, access to green spaces and natural environments has been shown to have a positive impact on mental health, reducing stress and improving overall wellbeing (Atkinson et al., 2020a). Therefore, fostering a healthy environment is not just about preserving nature; it's also about promoting the health and wellbeing of communities now and for future generations. Community engagement and participation are also key aspects of rural community wellbeing. Strong, vibrant communities are built on a foundation of active participation, social connections, and shared values. Encouraging community engagement, supporting local initiatives, and fostering a sense of belonging can help promote wellbeing and resilience in rural communities (Key et al., 2019). Community wellbeing in rural areas is intricately linked to the level of community engagement within these regions. In rural settings, community engagement goes beyond mere participation in local events; it embodies a shared responsibility for the overall health and prosperity of the community (Sprague Martinez et al., 2020). Strong community engagement fosters a sense of belonging and ownership among residents, leading to increased social cohesion and support networks. This also contributes to improved mental health and wellbeing among community



members. Additionally, active community engagement in rural areas can drive positive change, leading to the development of local initiatives that address specific needs and challenges faced by the community (Holden, 2018). By involving residents in decision-making processes and encouraging collaboration among stakeholders, rural communities can create sustainable solutions that enhance the quality of life for all residents (Blake et al., 2006). Therefore, promoting community engagement is not only essential for improving community wellbeing in rural areas but also for building resilient and thriving communities for the future (Tiernan et al., 2013). The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that explore the factors of Rural Community wellbeing. More specifically, we aim to address the following research questions:

Q1: What factors contribute towards the community wellbeing in rural areas?

Q2: What are the suggestions and recommendations for policymakers, community leaders, and stakeholders to enhance the wellbeing of rural communities?

The pursuit of rural community wellbeing demands a nuanced understanding of the interplay between various determinants, from healthcare access to social cohesion. Understanding community wellbeing in rural areas requires a comprehensive exploration of the factors that shape the quality of life in these areas. The present study sets the stage for a deeper exploration of these dynamics, aiming to inform policies and practices that can positively impact rural communities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is undertaken to explore the determinants of community wellbeing in the rural areas of Jammu region, J&K, Union Territory of India. The objective of the study is to investigate various ideas and perspectives and determine the factors associated with community wellbeing in rural areas. The data has been collected from a representative sample of individuals living in rural areas above the age of 18 years, ensuring that the sample is diverse and includes individuals from different demographic groups and geographical locations (Contreras-Barraza et al., 2022). The study utilized a mixed-method approach, initially adopting a qualitative technique and subsequently including a quantitative one. First, the study commenced by asking the research questions as follows: What does community wellbeing mean to them, how has community wellbeing changed over time in their area, and what factors have contributed to these changes? To address these questions, a total of 25 semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted. Following the recording of the responses, all the answers were transcribed verbatim and the data was analysed using thematic analysis, which is better suited to explore the subjective perspective of community wellbeing (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Secondly, the study adopted a quantitative approach to look at the factors that affect community wellbeing in rural areas through empirical investigation. Primary data was gathered using a cross-sectional survey method from a sample of 400 respondents who lived in rural areas. A predetermined survey instrument was used to collect data on various aspects of rural community wellbeing being used in various studies (Christakopoulou et al., 2001). 5-point Likert scales were used to measure several factors of the rural community's wellbeing for this study. The study utilised a non-probability convenience sampling strategy to collect data from participants due to the geographical limitations and accessibility issues inherent in isolated rural settings (Crouch et al., 2014). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was applied to the collected data to determine the latent dimensions or factors that underlie the construct of community wellbeing (Sürücü et al., 2022). A more relevant analysis was made possible by EFA's assistance in condensing a large number of observed variables into a more manageable collection of interpretable factors. To investigate the links and interrelationships between the identified elements and their individual effects on

the overall community wellbeing measure, correlation analysis was also carried out. This analysis allowed for the examination of the direction and strength of these correlations. Finally, the findings of the study are interpreted and recommendations have been made for policies and interventions to improve rural community wellbeing.

Demographic Profiling of the Respondents:

Demographic profiling of the respondents reveals important insights into the characteristics of the rural population and their wellbeing. Age, gender, income level, education, and occupation can significantly impact wellbeing perceptions and experiences within rural communities. The frequency table sheds important light on the socioeconomic factors and demographic profiling of the rural population under investigation. The sample's age distribution showed a very young demographic profile, with a sizable share (57%) of the population falling between the ages of 20 and 35. Since younger people may have different priorities, aspirations, and perspectives than older generations, they could have an impact on the factors that determine community wellbeing. The sample showed a notable male respondent (64.25%) when it came to gender representation, which may be a reflection of traditional gender roles and social norms that are common in rural areas. Understanding the diverse experiences and views of community wellbeing that men and women have may be affected by this gender gap. With about half (49.25%) having education below the tenth grade and the other half (50.75%) having education beyond the standard, the educational attainment levels were comparatively balanced. This variation in educational backgrounds may offer important new perspectives on how education influences a community's overall wellbeing and how it may affect several different areas, including social mobility, economic possibilities, and resource accessibility. The study's rural setting was reflected in the occupational distribution, which showed a wide variety of vocations, with a sizable percentage (18.25%) working in agriculture. The fact that students (17.75%), self-employed (17.5%), and other occupational groupings like labourers, skilled workers, and government personnel are present further emphasizes the intricate socioeconomic dynamics that exist in rural areas. The majority of respondents (61.5%) were married, which may reflect the importance of marriage connections in rural areas and the predominance of conventional family arrangements. This element may have an impact on family relationships, cultural norms, and social support systems, among other facets of community wellbeing (Dr Dominique Hes, (2017). Lastly, the data on housing circumstances showed that a sizable portion of the respondents (90.5%) resided in pacca houses, indicating that housing conditions in the rural areas under investigation were comparatively better. Given the positive effects that appropriate housing can have on overall quality of life, safety, and living standards, this element may be a key driver of community wellbeing (Ibrahim et al., 2013). All things considered, the frequency table offers a wealth of data regarding the rural population, including age, gender, education, employment, marital status, and housing circumstances. Researchers, decision-makers, and other stakeholders who are interested in comprehending and improving the wellbeing of rural communities might benefit greatly from an understanding of these variables, which are probably highly correlated with the factors that determine community wellbeing.

Table 1: Demographic Profiling of Rural Residents

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative |
|----------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Age | | | |
| 20 to 35 years | 228 | 57 | 57 |
| 35 and above | 172 | 43 | 100 |
| Gender | | | |
| Male | 257 | 64.25 | 64.25 |



| | | | |
|---------------------|-----|-------|-------|
| Female | 143 | 35.75 | 100 |
| Level of education | | | |
| Below 10th standard | 197 | 49.25 | 49.25 |
| Above 10th Standard | 203 | 50.75 | 100 |
| Occupation | | | |
| Farmer | 73 | 18.25 | 18.25 |
| Labour | 33 | 8.25 | 26.5 |
| Skill Worker | 42 | 10.5 | 37 |
| Govt. Job | 30 | 7.5 | 44.5 |
| Outsourced Staff | 28 | 7 | 64.75 |
| Student | 71 | 17.75 | 82.5 |
| Self-employed | 70 | 17.5 | 100 |
| Others | 53 | 13.3 | 57.75 |
| Marital Status | | | |
| Married | 246 | 61.5 | 61.5 |
| Unmarried | 154 | 38.5 | 100 |
| Type of house | | | |
| Pacca | 362 | 90.5 | 90.5 |
| Kachha | 38 | 9.5 | 100 |

Source: The Authors

RESULTS

Thematic Analysis:

To find out the determinants of community wellbeing in rural areas, it is crucial to possess a comprehensive analysis of the perspectives of the rural residents and their perceptions of community wellbeing. Thematic analysis is a versatile approach that is not explicitly linked to a specific epistemological or theoretical framework (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). This approach emphasizes the subjective experiences and interpretation of participants, including their perceptions, emotions, and experiences. It also ensures that the necessary conditions are in place for the generation of meaningful data. The most valuable information for understanding community wellbeing comes from participants' viewpoints and their evaluation of their experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The qualitative analysis provided valuable insights into the various elements that influence community wellbeing in rural areas, enhancing the quantitative findings. The in-depth interviews conducted for the thematic analysis demonstrated that social cohesion plays a crucial role in promoting a sense of belonging, trust, and collective identity among these groups. Participants highlighted the inherent connection between strong social connections and general wellbeing, emphasizing the importance of efforts that encourage social engagement, shared beliefs, and reciprocal assistance (Putnam, 2000; Wilkinson, 1991). In addition, the narratives emphasized the significant influence of natural amenities on the wellbeing of the community. Participants expressed the restorative and recreational benefits of natural landscapes, green spaces, and outdoor activities, which supports the theoretical understanding that recognizes the impact of environmental quality on psychological and physical wellbeing (Theodori, 2001). Furthermore, the qualitative data revealed the significance of sustainable local government, community infrastructure, and support systems in influencing residents' perspectives on wellbeing and quality of life. The narratives offered detailed insights into the complex interaction among these components, emphasizing the subtle contextual variations and personal experiences that quantitative metrics may fail to fully encompass. Through the process of triangulating qualitative and quantitative findings, a comprehensive understanding of the various factors that contribute to community wellbeing in rural areas was obtained. This knowledge may be used to inform prospective interventions and policy initiatives.

Table 2: Emerging Themes

| Sub-categories | Categories | Themes |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Supportive neighbours | Social connections and support | Social Cohesion |
| Sense of Unity and Respect | Unity and strong ties | |
| Strong connections | | |
| Sense of togetherness | | |
| Trust between each other | Initiatives for the better security | Perceived Safety |
| Safety in the locality | Active participation by local governing bodies | |
| Help and support each other | | |
| Help and support each other | Mutual support and relations | Community cohesion |
| Extended support | Sense of shared heritage and culture | |
| Connected to each other through shared values and place | Place attachment | |
| Better place of living | Preserving the environment | Environmental amenities |
| Shared love for the environment | Active participation | |
| Agriculture preservation and active participation | Sense of shared resources | |
| Better facilities in transportation | Infrastructure development | Community infrastructure assessment |
| Improved housing | Progress in the education as well as healthcare sector | |
| Access to medical facilities | Improvement in the transportation facilities | |
| Better education facilities | | |
| Community engagement in the local level | Trust and engagement | Sustainable local governance |
| Satisfactory governance | Decision making power and better governance | |
| Push towards better economic development | | |
| Sense of Trust and support | Trustworthiness and mutual aid | Community support |
| Fostering help | Strengthened support systems | |
| Mutual aid | | |
| Strong support system | | |

Source: The Authors

Exploratory Factor Analysis:

This present study aimed to clarify the complex relationship between the various aspects of community wellbeing in rural areas. The results of an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) followed by a correlation analysis are explained in this section. An Expansion Factor Analysis (EFA) consisting of 22 items was applied to the community wellbeing constructs. To make the necessary analyses easier, SPSS version 25 was used as the statistical program. The findings showed that several variables considerably influenced community wellbeing. Specifically, higher levels of social cohesion which are typified by robust community networks and resident trust were linked to better community wellbeing. Furthermore, Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sample adequacy indicate that the data are appropriate for factor analysis. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation is used to get the number of community wellbeing variables down to a minimum level. The latent root criterion, which is applied to variables having an eigenvalue greater than 1, has been used to determine the number of components to be retained. An item must have a factor loading of at least 0.60 to be considered a factor (Maskey et al., 2018). Factor analysis is appropriate for the

data, as indicated by the KMO value of 0.847, which indicates that the partial correlations between the variables are high.

Table 3: Factor Loadings

| Items Included in the Exploratory Factor Analysis | Factor loadings |
|--|-----------------|
| Factor 1: Perceived safety | |
| I feel safe to walk alone in the street at night | 0.871 |
| I feel safe to be alone at home during the night | 0.878 |
| I feel safe to leave the car in the street at night | 0.753 |
| I feel safe to walk alone in the street during the day | 0.726 |
| Factor 2: Social Cohesion | |
| I often speak on the phone with my neighbours | 0.812 |
| I often visit to my neighbor's home | 0.793 |
| I often go out with my neighbors | 0.766 |
| I often talk to my neighbors outside my home | 0.658 |
| Factor 3: Environmental amenities | |
| I feel satisfied with the space for parking in this area | 0.792 |
| I feel satisfied with the cleanliness in my area | 0.791 |
| I feel satisfied with the quality of water being supplied in this area | 0.708 |
| Factor 4: Community support | |
| I feel satisfied with the facilities of the child care | 0.774 |
| I feel satisfied with the services offered to elders | 0.732 |
| I feel satisfied with the sports and leisure infrastructure in my area | 0.695 |
| Factor 5: Community cohesion | |
| I am emotionally attached to this area | 0.793 |
| I will please to come back to this area | 0.759 |
| I am proud to live in this area | 0.63 |
| Factor 6: Community Infrastructure Assessment | |
| I feel satisfied with the availability of medical services in my area | 0.764 |
| I feel satisfied with the quality of schools | 0.717 |
| I am satisfied with public transport in my area | 0.713 |
| Factor 7: Sustainable Local Governance | |
| I feel satisfied with the local panchayat ghar | 0.832 |
| I feel satisfied with the supply of electricity in my area | 0.773 |

Source: The authors.

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation method; varimax with Kaiser Normalisation. Rotation converged in seven iterations;

KMO measure of sampling adequacy = 0.847; Bartlett's test of sphericity = 5589.706 (df = 496, sig = 0.000)

Perceived safety:

The feeling of safety is a fundamental component of community wellbeing, profoundly influencing the overall quality of life and social cohesion within a community. When residents feel safe (Bennetts et al., 2017), they are more likely to engage in community activities (Shahdadi, 2016), build strong social networks (Chataway, 2020), and invest in their local environment (Allik & Kearns, 2017). Safety enhances mental health, reduces stress, and fosters a sense of trust and solidarity among community members (Panelli et al., 2004). Conversely, a lack of safety can lead to isolation, fear, and a decline in community engagement, undermining the collective wellbeing. Thus, ensuring a safe environment is crucial for nurturing a thriving, resilient, and connected community.



Social cohesion:

Social cohesion is the complex web of social ties, networks, and connections that hold members of a community together. It is a crucial factor in determining the wellbeing of communities. It captures the level of mutual support, shared values, and trust that exists between members of the community, promoting a sense of solidarity, belonging, and collective identity (A. J. Williams et al., 2020). This multifaceted concept includes several elements, such as perceived interpersonal strength, civic involvement, and social participation (Aruqaj, 2023). Densely woven social networks, where people may access and mobilize both tangible and intangible resources through their social relationships, are indicative of robust social cohesiveness (Harraka, 2002). These resources can include group activities, information sharing, practical help, and emotional support. They all boost the community's resilience and overall wellbeing because members of these communities have a common sense of duty and dedication to the wellbeing of the community, they are therefore better able to overcome obstacles, make the most of group resources, and foster overall wellbeing (Haslam et al., 2023; (Ghazanfari et al., 2023).

Environmental amenities:

Environmental amenities, encompassing natural resources, green spaces, and environmental assets, play a pivotal role in shaping community wellbeing in rural contexts. Access to pristine landscapes, clean air and water, and diverse flora and fauna not only contribute to the visual appeal and aesthetic qualities of rural areas (Masoomi & van de Lindt, 2019) but also provide opportunities for recreational activities, spiritual renewal, and deeper connection with nature (Bottini, 2018). These environmental amenities serve as valuable community assets, fostering a sense of place attachment and pride among residents, while also attracting tourists and visitors, thereby bolstering the local economy (Binns et al., 2009). Furthermore, the preservation of these natural resources and the responsible management of environmental assets are essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability and resilience of rural communities, safeguarding their ability to thrive and maintain their distinct character (French et al., 2014). Ultimately, environmental amenities represent a critical determinant of community wellbeing, intertwining aspects of ecological integrity, economic vitality, and cultural identity within rural settings.

Community support:

Community support includes the presence of social networks, reciprocal assistance, and available resources that individuals may depend on within their community. Strong community support systems are essential in rural areas for improving overall wellbeing. Support networks offer both emotional and practical help (Molinillo et al., 2020), allowing individuals to handle difficulties, obtain information and resources, and participate in collaborative problem-solving (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). Community support cultivates a feeling of inclusion, mutual exchange, and joint accountability among inhabitants, encouraging social unity and collective adaptability (Rothon et al., 2012). In addition, effective community support systems can help to activate local resources, utilizing the capabilities and advantages already within the community to tackle shared issues and work towards mutual objectives (Vieno et al., 2007). Communities that have robust support systems are more adept at dealing with challenges, reducing possible hazards, and taking advantage of opportunities. As a result, they significantly enhance the general wellbeing and quality of life of their citizens.



Community cohesion:

Community cohesiveness is the measure of the level of togetherness, shared values, and collective identity that exists within a community. It measures the degree to which individuals in a community feel a strong connection, trust, and respect for each other, going beyond their distinctions and creating a unified social structure (Blake et al., n.d.-b). A robust community cohesion is distinguished by a collective comprehension of the community's standards, customs, and ambitions, along with a readiness to cooperate and unite efforts towards shared objectives. In rural settings, unity and cooperation among community members are essential for fostering a sense of togetherness (Atkinson et al., 2020b), enabling joint efforts (Daley, 2009), and improving the general welfare of the group (Ziersch et al., 2020). It creates a setting in which people experience support, appreciation, and a sense of belonging to their group, leading to feelings of safety, adaptability, and overall contentment with life (Ratcliffe, 2012). Therefore, by promoting community unity through inclusive strategies, activities led by the community, and cultivating a collective sense of purpose, rural communities can greatly enhance their wellbeing and achieve sustainable development.

Community infrastructure assessment:

Community infrastructure assessment evaluates the quality, accessibility, and adequacy of physical infrastructure within rural communities. This encompasses various elements such as transportation networks (roads, bridges, public transportation), utilities (water supply, sanitation, electricity), communication systems, and public facilities (schools, healthcare centres, community centres). Robust and well-maintained infrastructure is crucial for supporting essential services, enabling economic activities, and enhancing the overall quality of life in rural areas (Mcshane, 2006). Inadequate or deteriorating infrastructure can pose significant challenges, hindering access to resources, limiting mobility, and impeding economic development (Atkociuniene et al., 2015). Community infrastructure assessment aims to identify gaps, prioritize infrastructure needs, and inform investment decisions to ensure that rural communities have the necessary physical foundations to thrive and meet the needs of their residents. By strengthening community infrastructure, policymakers and stakeholders can address disparities, promote sustainable development, and contribute to the overall wellbeing of rural populations.

Sustainable local governance:

Sustainable local governance emerges as a critical determinant of community wellbeing in rural contexts. This multifaceted construct encompasses the effectiveness, transparency, and responsiveness of local governance structures in promoting sustainable development and addressing the unique needs of rural communities (Mcewan, 2003). It encapsulates the capacity of local authorities to engage in inclusive decision-making processes, facilitate stakeholder participation, and formulate policies that balance economic, social, and environmental considerations (Chong-Min, 2006). Effective sustainable local governance fosters an enabling environment for community empowerment, resource management, and the implementation of initiatives that enhance the overall quality of life (Fontan Jean-Marc et al., 2009). Moreover, it cultivates a sense of trust, accountability, and legitimacy between governing bodies and rural residents, thereby strengthening the social fabric and collective wellbeing of the community. Consequently, communities characterized by robust sustainable local governance mechanisms are better equipped to navigate challenges, leverage available resources, and collectively pursue aspirations for long-term wellbeing and resilience.

Correlation analysis: The correlation matrix offers significant insights into the interactions between the determined factors of rural community wellbeing. The findings reveal that there

is a noteworthy inverse relationship between perceived safety (PS) and environmental amenities (EA) ($r = -.123, p < 0.05$) as well as social cohesion (SC) ($r = -.125, p < 0.05$). This implies that in the rural communities under investigation, higher levels of perceived safety could be linked to lower levels of social cohesion and environmental amenities. In contrast, there is a positive link between perceived safety (PS) and sustainable local government (SLG) ($r = 0.246, p < 0.01$), community infrastructure assessment (CIA) ($r = 0.244, p < 0.01$), and community cohesion (CC) ($r = 0.119, p < 0.05$). These results are consistent with earlier research ((Deller et al., 2001; Sirgy & Cornwell, 2002)) that has emphasized the significance of infrastructure, safety perceptions, and efficient government in determining community wellbeing. Furthermore, social cohesion (SC) is positively correlated with environmental amenities (EA) ($r = 0.355, p < 0.01$), community cohesion (CC) ($r = 0.215, p < 0.01$), and community support (CS) ($r = 0.276, p < 0.01$). This indicates the critical role that social cohesion plays in promoting a sense of community and overall wellbeing. Stronger social ties and support systems within rural communities can be attributed to environmental quality and access to natural resources, as evidenced by the positive correlations between environmental amenities (EA) and community cohesion (CC) ($r = 0.131, p < 0.01$) and community support (CS) ($r = 0.332, p < 0.01$) ((Stedman, 2003;Theodori, 2001)). Notably, a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.291, p < 0.01$) has been observed between community infrastructure assessment (CIA) and sustainable local governance (SLG), indicating the interdependence of physical infrastructure and efficient local governance in fostering community wellbeing. Nonetheless, there appears to be a negative correlation ($r = -0.116, p < 0.05$) between perceived safety (PS) and community support (CS), indicating possible compromises or subtleties in the association between these factors. These correlational results highlight the intricate interactions between many factors that influence community wellbeing in rural regions. The findings highlight the significance of taking into account a variety of elements when creating comprehensive strategies to improve the wellbeing of rural communities, such as social cohesion, environmental amenities, community cohesion, infrastructure, governance, and support systems (Kusel, 2001). To learn more about the processes underlying community wellbeing in rural contexts, future research might examine possible mediating or moderating factors as well as delve further into these linkages.

Table 4: Correlation among Factors

| | PS | SC | EA | CC | CIA | SLG | CS |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----|
| PS | 1 | | | | | | |
| SC | -.125* | 1 | | | | | |
| EA | -.123* | .355** | 1 | | | | |
| CC | .119* | .215** | .131** | 1 | | | |
| CIA | .244** | 0.061 | 0.084 | -.115* | 1 | | |
| SLG | .246** | -0.041 | -0.071 | -0.061 | .291** | 1 | |
| CS | -.116* | .276** | .332** | .332** | -0.052 | -0.094 | 1 |
| Source: The Authors | | | | | | | |
| *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). | | | | | | | |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). | | | | | | | |

DISCUSSION

The multifaceted influence of multiple elements on the wellbeing of rural communities is shaped by a confluence of social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political. By employing a mixed-method approach combining qualitative interviews and a quantitative survey, this investigation offers an integrative examination of the multidimensional factors influencing rural community wellbeing. The emergence of distinct yet interrelated factors, such



as social cohesion, environmental amenities, community infrastructure, and sustainable local governance, underscores the intricate and multidimensional nature of this phenomenon. These findings resonate with the theoretical underpinnings proposed by many research studies that emphasize the intricate interplay of social, environmental, infrastructural, and governance elements in fostering community wellbeing, particularly in rural settings (Kusel, 2001; Theodori, 2001). The qualitative accounts contextualized how economic forces intertwine with social fabric, civic services, and environmental amenities holistically shaping rural lived experiences. Residents perceive "community" as collaborative civic spheres that promote cohesion and enhance quality of life. They believe that economic, social, institutional, and environmental factors jointly contribute to the development of successful rural communities. These perspectives highlight the importance of creating comprehensive policies that address the interconnected factors that contribute to the overall wellbeing of rural communities. Moreover, the correlation analysis provided insightful insights into the complex network of relationships between the elements that were revealed. Strong community ties, easy access to resources, and social cohesion all work together to improve overall wellbeing. Similar studies claim about the positive correlations that have been found between social cohesion, environmental amenities, and community cohesion (Stedman, 2003). On the other hand, additional research is necessary to understand the negative correlation between social cohesion and perceived safety, as this could indicate subtleties or trade-offs in the dynamics between these determinants that could be impacted by mediating or contextual factors. The idea that functional governance mechanisms and physical infrastructure are intrinsically linked in their contribution to community wellbeing is further supported by the noteworthy positive correlation between community infrastructure assessment and sustainable local governance (Candau et al., 2005). This research highlights how important it is for policymakers, local government representatives, and community members to prioritize infrastructure development and put governance plans into place that support resilient, sustainable, and prosperous rural communities (Deller et al., 2001). These results have numerous ramifications. Primarily, they emphasize the need for a comprehensive and multifaceted strategy to tackle community wellbeing in rural regions, acknowledging the interdependence of social, environmental, infrastructure, and governance elements (Williams et al., 2013). It is the goal of policymakers and community leaders to create all-encompassing plans that concurrently improve social cohesion, protect environmental resources, upgrade infrastructure, and fortify local government systems. Furthermore, these results emphasize the value of participatory methods and community involvement in rural development projects (Eversole, 2003; Shortall, 2008). Rural communities can more effectively identify their specific needs, set priorities for their resources, and create customized solutions that support their cultural settings and wellbeing goals by promoting a feeling of community ownership and group decision-making. In addition to investigating the temporal dynamics and potential feedback loops that shape community wellbeing over time, future research should go deeper into the potential mediating or moderating factors that may influence the relationships among the identified determinants. Additional information about the generalizability and context-specific nuances of these findings may be obtained through longitudinal studies and comparative analyses conducted in a variety of rural contexts (Shortall, 2008). Furthermore, to turn these findings into workable strategies and treatments, interdisciplinary collaborations involving researchers, legislators, community leaders, and pertinent stakeholders are essential. To improve the overall wellbeing and sustainable development of rural communities, coordinated efforts can be undertaken to create synergies between academic research, policy-making, and grassroots activities.



CONCLUSION

This study presents convincing evidence of the various aspects that contribute to the overall wellbeing of rural communities. By conducting thorough qualitative and quantitative analyses, to identify specific factors that strongly influence overall wellbeing in these communities. These factors include social cohesion, environmental amenities, community cohesion, community infrastructure, and sustainable local governance. The correlation analysis provided additional clarity on the complex connections between these characteristics, emphasizing the combined impact of strong social connections, availability of natural resources, and efficient government systems in promoting a feeling of wellbeing. The qualitative insights gained from in-depth interviews and interactive methods were very valuable in addition to the quantitative findings. These insights captured the real-life experiences, perspectives, and specific details that impact the wellbeing of rural communities. These findings highlight the need to take a comprehensive approach that considers the social, environmental, infrastructural, and governance components to enhance the overall wellbeing and quality of life in rural communities. This study establishes the foundation for further investigation into the complex interaction of elements that influence the wellbeing of communities in rural areas by conducting comparative analyses across various rural and urban locations or communities could provide useful insights into the contextual differences and nuances that may impact the relative significance and expressions of these factors. Furthermore, future research should investigate the potential mediating or moderating factors that might impact the connections between the main elements, such as demographic variables, socio-economic status, or cultural norms. Studying these mechanisms could clarify the intricate paths by which different factors impact community wellbeing, providing insights for specific treatments and policy measures. By including additional determinants or variables that were not considered in the current study, the research scope can be expanded to enhance the understanding of the factors that contribute to community wellbeing. Ultimately, promoting multidisciplinary collaborations and partnerships among academics, policymakers, community leaders, and relevant stakeholders can help to effectively convert research findings into practical strategies and long-lasting initiatives. These cooperative endeavours have the potential to connect academic research with practical application, ultimately leading to the improvement of community welfare in rural regions. Although this study adds to our knowledge of the variables affecting community wellbeing in rural areas, several limitations need to be noted. First off, the study's cross-sectional design makes it impossible to demonstrate causal links between the determined factors and community wellbeing (Levin, 2006). Furthermore, the study used self-reported data, which could be biased in several ways. Social desirability bias may have an impact on participants' answers, leading them to give answers that are more socially acceptable than ones that accurately reflect their opinions (Rosenman et al., 2011). recollect bias may also occur because participants may find it challenging to recollect and report their experiences and perceptions of the factors that influence community wellbeing (Althubaiti, 2016). Furthermore, it might be difficult to adequately capture and operationalize these multidimensional ideas using constrained measurements or indicators due to the complexity of constructs like social cohesiveness, environmental amenities, and sustainable local government (Sampson, 2009). The particular scales or measures used may limit the study's capacity to accurately capture the subtleties and complexity of the constructs. In addition, estimates of the connections may be skewed by unobserved community- or individual-level variables that affect community wellbeing as well as the determinants. Lastly, although the study included the collection of qualitative data, the contextual character of qualitative research may potentially limit the analysis and interpretation of this data as well as the applicability of its conclusions to different rural situations (Noble & Smith, 2015).



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