

## Resource Dependency and Sustainable Rural Development: The Role of Livelihoods and Regional Economic Potential in Berau, Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of rural livelihoods and regional economic potential on sustainable rural development through community empowerment and local economic development, as well as to examine the moderating role of resource dependency. The study was conducted in Berau Regency using a quantitative approach. Data were collected from village heads as key informants because they possess strategic knowledge regarding village development conditions, local economic potential, and community empowerment programs. The analysis method employed was Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling using the SEM-PLS approach to test relationships among variables. The results indicate that rural livelihoods and regional economic potential have a positive and significant effect on community empowerment. Furthermore, community empowerment positively influences local economic development, while local economic development significantly contributes to sustainable rural development. The findings also reveal that resource dependency weakens the relationship between local economic development and sustainable rural development, indicating that excessive dependence on external resources may reduce community autonomy and sustainability capacity. This study contributes theoretically by integrating Resource-Based View Theory and Resource Dependence Theory in explaining sustainable rural development. Practically, the study provides strategic recommendations for local governments to strengthen community capacity, optimize local resources, and reduce dependency on external actors in rural development processes.

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## 1. Introduction

Villages are the smallest governmental entity and are interesting to study due to their large number, and nearly every government in the world embraces the concept. Village-based development in Indonesia is also attracting attention, with the issuance of Law No. 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, a separate regulation governing villages. Environmental issues will also continue to be adapted in the future with increasing awareness and will be adopted by the government as part of sustainable development policies.(Boekoesoe & Maksum, 2022).

Rural development is a strategic agenda for promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, particularly in developing countries like Indonesia. In recent decades, development approaches have shifted beyond focusing solely on economic growth to improving community well-being through strengthening sustainable livelihoods.(Shi et al., 2025)The concept of sustainable livelihoods emphasizes the ability of individuals or households to utilize their assets to maintain and improve well-being without depleting future resources. This approach later developed into a central framework in rural development studies (Scoones, 1998). Livelihood is considered a synergistic target that directly influences both economic and social dimensions, while also offering some co-benefits for the environment.(Bashar et al., 2024).

On the other hand, developing regional economic potential through a local economic development (LED) approach is increasingly seen as a crucial strategy for driving area-based economic growth. This approach emphasizes the utilization of local resources, strengthening leading sectors, and increasing community participation in economic activities. Recent

research in Indonesia shows that developing sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and local value chains can increase village economic resilience and create new job opportunities.(Yusriadi, 2025) However, the success of local economic development largely depends on the ability of rural communities to access and utilize available opportunities. In this regard, community empowerment plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between economic potential and sustainable development. Recent studies emphasize that community participation, strengthening local institutions, and increasing social capacity are crucial elements in ensuring that economic development truly benefits the wider community.(Amandaria et al., 2023). Community empowerment not only increases economic capacity but also strengthens community control over resources and development processes, thereby supporting inclusive and sustainable development. Village development that focuses on resource utilization can stimulate the creation of job opportunities and a variety of new economic activities. This aligns with the Resource Base Theory by Barney (1991) in Priem & Butler (2001). This theory describes a company's ability to achieve competitive advantage, thereby ensuring its sustainability.

From the perspective of Resource-Based View Theory, sustainable rural development is viewed as the outcome of a village's ability to effectively manage and utilize its internal resources to create long-term sustainability and competitive advantages (Liu et al., 2021). Rural livelihoods represent the strategic resources owned by rural communities, including human, social, natural, financial, and physical capital, which serve as the foundation for promoting community empowerment and local economic development (Ira & Muhamad, 2020). Through community empowerment, local resources are not only utilized productively but also strengthened to enhance community capacity, self-reliance, and long-term sustainability (Ronzon et al., 2025). Furthermore, local economic development acts as a mechanism for transforming rural resources into sustainable economic value and improving community welfare (Olmedo et al., 2023). In this relationship, resource dependency functions as a moderating variable that determines the extent to which dependence on certain

resources may strengthen or diminish the impact of rural livelihoods on sustainable rural development. Communities with high adaptive capacity in dealing with resource dependency are better positioned to maximize local potential and support sustainable rural development.

Although research on sustainable rural development has increased significantly in recent years, important conceptual and empirical gaps remain that require further study, particularly in the context of resource-based regions. Recent studies have shown that sustainable rural development faces multidimensional challenges such as low economic value added, limited infrastructure, and increasing environmental pressures.(Geng et al., 2024). The recent research also shows that the study of rural livelihoods is growing globally, but remains fragmented and not yet strongly integrated with regional economic dimensions. Recent bibliometric studies reveal that research on sustainable livelihoods tends to focus on issues such as climate change, food security, and environmental adaptation, but has not systematically examined their relationship to the development of regional economic potential.(Tambile et al., 2024). This shows that there is a conceptual gap. This is evident in the lack of conceptual integration between rural livelihoods and regional economic development. The two concepts are still studied separately, resulting in the lack of a comprehensive theoretical framework linking them in the context of sustainable rural development. Research in the Indonesian context shows that while developing sectors such as tourism and agriculture can indeed boost economic growth and regional resilience, their impact on people's livelihoods is not always equitable and sustainable.(Yusriadi, 2025). Thus, there is a gap between the regional economic growth approach and the community welfare-centered development approach.

This research offers several key innovations compared to previous studies: 1) Cross-disciplinary integration. This research integrates rural livelihoods, regional economic potential, and sustainable rural development into a single, coherent conceptual framework. Unlike previous studies, which tended to be partial, this study simultaneously links village household capacity with regional economic dynamics.2) Sequential mediation approach This

research not only examines direct relationships but also develops indirect relationship mechanisms through community empowerment and local economic development as sequential mediators. This approach provides a deeper understanding of the process of sustainable rural development. 3) The new role of resource dependency as a moderating variable. Unlike previous studies that positioned resource dependency as an independent variable, this study positions it as a moderating variable that influences the strength of the relationship between development variables. This provides a new perspective in understanding the resource curse phenomenon at the local level.

This study aims to examine the effect of rural livelihoods on sustainable rural development through community empowerment and local economic development, while also investigating the moderating role of resource dependency in resource-based regions. The research was conducted in Berau Regency, an area characterized by a natural resource-based economy. This provides a contextual contribution that is still rarely explored in the rural development literature. Berau Regency, as part of East Kalimantan Province, has significant regional economic potential, particularly in natural resource sectors such as mining, plantations, fisheries, and tourism. However, a common phenomenon in resource-rich regions is the imbalance between economic growth and the well-being of local communities. This aligns with the "resource curse" theory proposed by Richard Auty (1993), which states that regions with abundant natural resource wealth tend to experience non-inclusive economic growth and increasing social inequality.(Dewi et al., 2025).

Based on the identified research gap, this study proposes the hypothesis that rural livelihoods and regional economic potential affect community empowerment, which subsequently influences local economic development and contributes to sustainable rural development. Furthermore, the relationship between local economic development and sustainable rural development is moderated by resource dependency.

Strengthening rural livelihoods increases household economic capacity through access to assets, income diversification, and skills development. Recent studies have shown

that strong livelihoods directly contribute to improved well-being in rural communities through increased income and economic resilience.

H1: Rural livelihoods (X1) have a positive effect on community empowerment (Z1).

Regional economic potential reflects a region's ability to create economic opportunities based on local resources. Optimizing this potential can increase community incomes, expand employment opportunities, and boost the well-being of rural communities.

H2: Regional economic potential (X2) has a significant effect on community empowerment (Z1).

Communities with higher levels of well-being tend to have a greater capacity to participate in economic activities, including local investment, entrepreneurship, and the development of micro-enterprises. This provides a crucial foundation for driving local economic development.

H3: Community empowerment (Z1) has a significant influence on local economic development (Z2).

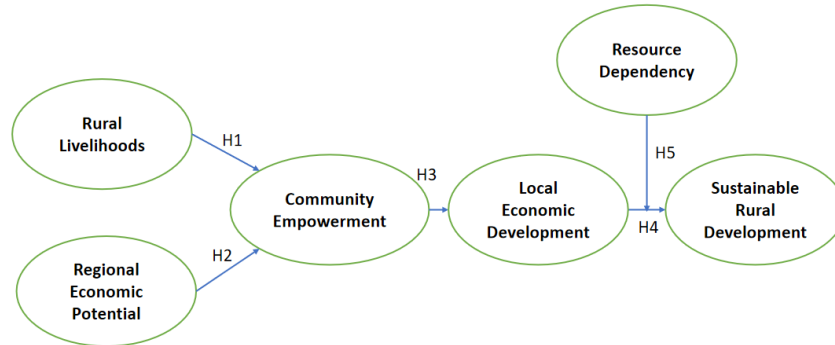
*Local economic development* plays a role as the main mechanism in transforming economic activities into sustainable development through job creation, increasing economic added value, and strengthening community-based economies.

H4: Local economic development (Z2) has a significant influence on sustainable rural development (Y).

In resource-based regions like Berau in East Kalimantan, dependence on natural resources can impact development effectiveness. High levels of resource dependency tend to hinder economic diversification and equitable distribution of prosperity, weakening the link between economic activity and sustainable development.

H5: Resource dependency moderates the influence of local economic development (Z2) on sustainable rural development (Y).

Based on this description, the conceptual framework in this research is as follows:



**Figure 1.** Research Framework

## 2. Methods

The population in this study were the village heads from 100 villages in Berau Regency. The selection of village heads as the sole respondents in this study is methodologically justified due to their central and authoritative role in rural governance and sustainable development processes. As the highest decision-makers at the village level, village heads possess comprehensive knowledge of local development planning, resource allocation, and policy implementation. They are directly responsible for formulating village development strategies, including economic, social, and environmental programs, which are the core dimensions of sustainable rural development. Located in Berau Regency, East Kalimantan Province, which borders the North Kalimantan region, consisting of 52 large and small islands with 13 Districts, 10 villages, 100 villages so that the population distribution is spread across several regions. In order to accurately describe the variables studied, the researcher took all populations as samples. Therefore, sampling in this study used a saturated sampling method. Based on this sampling technique, the number of samples (n) was obtained 100 Village Heads from 100 villages in Berau Regency.

Based on the nature of scientific exploration, this research is fundamental research or basic research or pure research, namely research aimed at supporting the advancement of science.(Gujarati, 2012)and aims to develop knowledge by referring to previous research(Zulvianti et al., 2022), by using a quantitative approach to complete research and to gain further knowledge(Cooper, 2014). Quantitative research tests several variables and question indicators by using statistical data in the form of numbers to be tested objectively by examining the relationship between these variables, where each variable is then tested and measured with other variables using statistical procedure instruments (Hair et al., 2019). The hypothesis taken must be clear by using validity and reliability instruments.(Suprihatin & Rawi, 2023)

Next, the researcher created a questionnaire in the Google Forms application and distributed it to respondents. Measurements were carried out using a Likert scale. The Likert scale is used to measure the attitudes, opinions, influences, and perceptions of an individual or group of people regarding social phenomena. The Likert scale contains 5 (five) levels of response preference options, namely: Strongly Disagree (STS), Disagree (TS), Neutral (N), Agree (S), and Strongly Agree (SS). Testing was carried out with a series of complex analyses. Meanwhile, PLS-SEM aims to test the predictive relationship between constructs by seeing whether there is a relationship or influence between these constructs. (Solling, 2019).

**Table 1.** Variables and Measures Used in This Study

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Rural Livelihood	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Livelihood Assets</li> <li>2. Vulnerability Context</li> <li>3. Livelihood Outcomes</li> </ol>	(Putri et al., 2025)
Regional Economic Potential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Natural Resource Potential</li> <li>2. Infrastructure and Accessibility</li> <li>3. Leading Sectors and Markets</li> </ol>	(Kyswantoro & Arnanto, 2022)

Community Empowerment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Active Community Participation</li> <li>2. Capacity &amp; Skills Building</li> <li>3. Resource Accessibility</li> <li>4. Local Independence</li> <li>5. Institutional Strengthening</li> <li>6. Increased Income</li> <li>7. Free and Dynamic</li> </ol>	(Chukwuma & Olorunfemi, 2021)
Local Economic Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increasing Community Income</li> <li>2. Diversification of Economic Enterprises</li> <li>3. Active Community Participation</li> <li>4. Capital Access and Management</li> <li>5. The Role of Local Institutions (BUMDes/Cooperatives)</li> <li>6. Technology Adoption and Innovation</li> <li>7. Improving Human Resources Quality</li> <li>8. Market Network Expansion</li> <li>9. Institutions and Communication</li> <li>10. Environmental Sustainability</li> </ol>	(Ayunda et al; 2024, nd; Cantafio & Parisi, 2021)
Sustainable Rural Development	<p>Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Infrastructure and Accessibility</li> <li>2. Environment and Sanitation</li> </ol> <p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Income Village</li> <li>4. Utilization of local potential</li> </ol> <p>Social:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Active role of society</li> <li>6. Preservation of local wisdom</li> </ol>	(Chukwuma & Olorunfemi, 2021)
Resource Dependency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dependence on external resources</li> <li>2. Resource concentration</li> <li>3. Proportion of main resource contribution</li> <li>4. Dependence on resource-based income</li> <li>5. Dependence on commodity exports</li> <li>6. Fiscal dependence</li> <li>7. Dependence on technology and knowledge</li> <li>8. Dependence on external networks/relationships</li> <li>9. Level of uncertainty of resource access</li> <li>10. Power asymmetry</li> </ol>	(Bakri et al., 2024; Mworira, 2019; Susanti & Rosid, 2026)

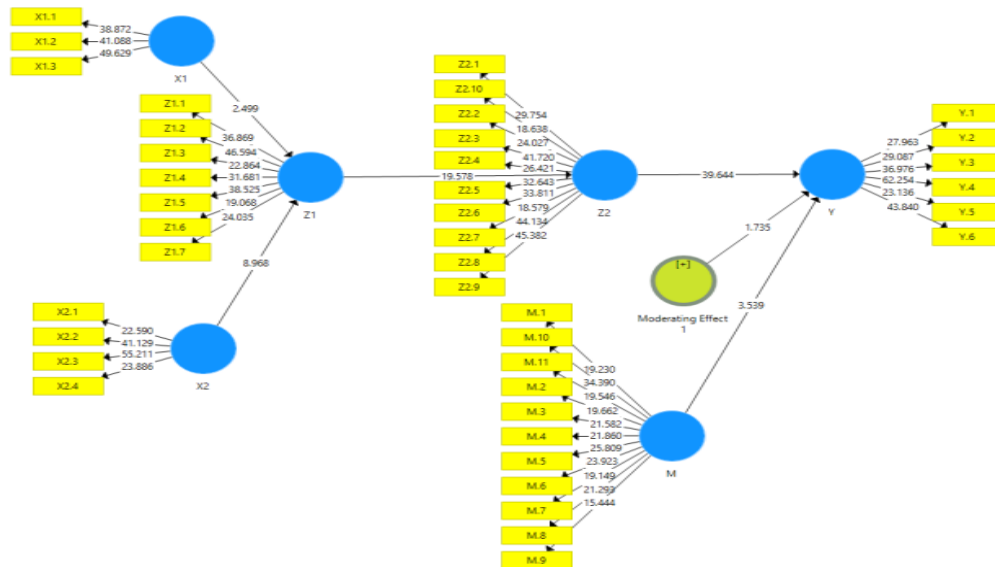
## 11. Level of resource diversification

### 3. Results

#### Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive results of the respondents' characteristics show that 98% of respondents were male or there were 98 respondents and 2% of respondents were female or there were 2 respondents. Of the 100 respondents, 1% of respondents were aged between 31 and 40, 12% were aged between 21 and 30, 36% were aged between 41 and 50, and 51% were aged >51. The last education was divided into five levels, from junior high school to bachelor's degree. Five respondents had a junior high school education, 77 respondents had a high school/equivalent education, five respondents had a diploma education, 11 respondents had a bachelor's degree, and two respondents had a master's degree.

#### Measurement Model Evaluation Results (Outer Model)



**Figure 2.** Outer Model

Measurement model evaluation aims to ensure the quality of the data used in PLS-SEM analysis by assessing construct validity and reliability. This step is crucial to ensure that each indicator accurately represents the latent construct, ensuring that research results are free from measurement error and more accurately reflect empirical reality. (Hair et al., 2022). The PLS Algorithm estimation results are presented in Figure 2 below:

### Convergent Validity

The convergent validity test in PLS with reflective indicators is assessed based on the factor loading of the indicators that measure the construct. Convergent validity is used to test the relationship between reflective indicators and their latent variables. The indicator will be said to be valid if its factor loading value is greater than 0.7. Convergent validity can also be determined through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value. An instrument is said to be convergently valid if the AVE value for each variable is greater than 0.5 (Chin, 2010). The results of the convergent validity test for all instruments are presented in the following table:

**Table 2.** Convergent Validity

Variable	Indicator	Factor Loading	AVE	Information
Rural Livelihoods (X1)	X1.1	0.884	0.776	Valid
	X1.2	0.884		
	X1.3	0.874		
Regional Economic Potential (X2)	X2.1	0.802	0.689	Valid
	X2.2	0.860		
	X2.3	0.871		
	X2.4	0.784		
Community Empowerment (Z1)	Z1.1	0.845	0.675	Valid
	Z1.2	0.860		
	Z1.3	0.806		

	Z1.4	0.827		
	Z1.5	0.858		
	Z1.6	0.740		
	Z1.7	0.811		
Local Economic Development (Z2)	Z2.1	0.780	0.657	Valid
	Z2.2	0.785		
	Z2.3	0.857		
	Z2.4	0.791		
	Z2.5	0.829		
	Z2.6	0.823		
	Z2.7	0.744		
	Z2.8	0.850		
	Z2.9	0.849		
	Z2.10	0.789		
	Z2*M	1,276		
Resource Dependency (M)	M.1	0.730	0.609	Valid
	M.2	0.731		
	M.3	0.808		
	M.4	0.779		
	M.5	0.840		
	M.6	0.788		
	M.7	0.814		
	M.8	0.765		
	M.9	0.727		
	M.10	0.817		
	M.11	0.775		
Sustainable Rural Development (Y)	Y.1	0.805	0.724	Valid
	Y.2	0.830		
	Y.3	0.849		
	Y.4	0.888		
	Y.5	0.864		
	Y.6	0.865		

Source: SmartPLS output

The table above illustrates the factor loading (convergent validity) of each indicator. A factor loading value  $>0.7$  or with a significance value  $<0.05$  is considered valid. This table shows that all factor loading values for indicators X, Z, M, and Y are greater than 0.7. This indicates that these indicators are valid. Similarly, based on the AVE value, all variables in this study have an AVE value above 0.5, thus ensuring that the questionnaire in this study meets convergent validity. Therefore, it can be stated that overall, the indicators developed are able to accurately explain the variables.

### Discriminant Validity

The discriminant validity of the measurement model is assessed based on the cross-loading value with the construct. If the correlation of the construct with each indicator (measurement item) is greater than the construct size in the other blocks, then the latent construct is able to predict its indicators better than the other constructs. According to Ghozali (2014) An indicator is said to be valid if the correlation value of a construct with its own construct is greater than the correlation value with other constructs. Thus, discriminant validity is met. The results of the discriminant validity test can be seen in the following table:

**Table 3.** Results of Discriminant Validity Test (Cross Loading)

Question Items	M	Moderating Effect 1	X1	X2	Y	Z1	Z2
M.1	0.730	0.191	0.137	0.117	0.239	0.108	0.172
M.10	0.817	0.065	0.067	0.157	0.265	0.169	0.217
M.11	0.775	0.151	0.033	0.071	0.173	0.087	0.138
M.2	0.731	0.199	0.099	0.091	0.222	0.120	0.179
M.3	0.808	0.142	-0.010	0.011	0.134	0.063	0.101
M.4	0.779	0.159	0.023	0.060	0.106	0.101	0.061
M.5	0.840	0.116	0.014	0.055	0.149	0.099	0.100
M.6	0.788	0.085	0.057	0.086	0.238	0.120	0.219
M.7	0.814	0.215	-0.049	-0.019	0.086	0.017	0.047
M.8	0.765	0.137	0.019	0.030	0.137	0.075	0.092

M.9	0.727	0.224	0.014	0.067	0.132	0.092	0.130
X1.1	0.076	-0.040	0.886	0.516	0.395	0.372	0.459
X1.2	0.050	0.012	0.884	0.477	0.432	0.397	0.489
X1.3	0.050	-0.133	0.874	0.624	0.477	0.515	0.528
X2.1	0.092	-0.075	0.524	0.802	0.453	0.457	0.489
X2.2	0.081	-0.113	0.506	0.860	0.433	0.525	0.505
X2.3	0.096	-0.119	0.522	0.871	0.517	0.639	0.560
X2.4	0.072	-0.090	0.521	0.784	0.507	0.518	0.551
Y.1	0.198	-0.059	0.410	0.425	0.805	0.581	0.678
Y.2	0.157	-0.046	0.408	0.487	0.830	0.657	0.733
Y.3	0.214	-0.086	0.410	0.464	0.849	0.572	0.742
Y.4	0.209	-0.128	0.473	0.531	0.888	0.623	0.764
Y.5	0.245	-0.167	0.398	0.499	0.864	0.573	0.695
Y.6	0.230	-0.130	0.446	0.535	0.865	0.617	0.718
Z1.1	0.078	-0.163	0.435	0.569	0.588	0.845	0.594
Z1.2	0.093	-0.093	0.429	0.573	0.586	0.860	0.595
Z1.3	0.048	-0.088	0.367	0.488	0.561	0.806	0.589
Z1.4	0.146	-0.178	0.384	0.550	0.604	0.827	0.634
Z1.5	0.126	-0.134	0.438	0.555	0.596	0.858	0.636
Z1.6	0.134	-0.062	0.373	0.475	0.557	0.740	0.615
Z1.7	0.153	-0.125	0.423	0.533	0.591	0.811	0.632
Z2 * M	0.187	1,000	-0.070	-0.122	-0.121	-0.148	-0.096
Z2.1	0.148	-0.053	0.381	0.445	0.655	0.565	0.780
Z2.10	0.176	0.041	0.496	0.531	0.635	0.542	0.789
Z2.2	0.102	-0.067	0.425	0.520	0.653	0.644	0.785
Z2.3	0.146	-0.088	0.474	0.562	0.691	0.655	0.857
Z2.4	0.139	-0.070	0.471	0.482	0.683	0.565	0.791
Z2.5	0.145	-0.114	0.499	0.557	0.723	0.619	0.829
Z2.6	0.107	-0.125	0.473	0.525	0.714	0.615	0.823
Z2.7	0.130	-0.008	0.403	0.406	0.638	0.552	0.744
Z2.8	0.235	-0.130	0.489	0.581	0.745	0.655	0.850
Z2.9	0.234	-0.135	0.452	0.524	0.732	0.625	0.849

Source: SmartPLS output

Based on the cross-loading values in the table above, it can be seen that all indicators that make up each variable in this study have met discriminant validity because they have the largest outer loading value for the variable they form, compared to the other variables. Therefore, all indicators in each variable in this study have met the discriminant validity evaluation.

### Reliability Test

The reliability test in this case is *internal consistency reliability*. This test measures how much the indicator variable increases when the latent variable increases. The most well-known criterion used to measure internal consistency is Cronbach's Alpha, which must be greater than 0.6. Another alternative to Cronbach's Alpha that can be used is Composite Reliability. The recommended Composite Reliability value as a benchmark is greater than 0.7 (Abdillah & Hartono, 2015). The results of the reliability test in this study are shown in the following table:

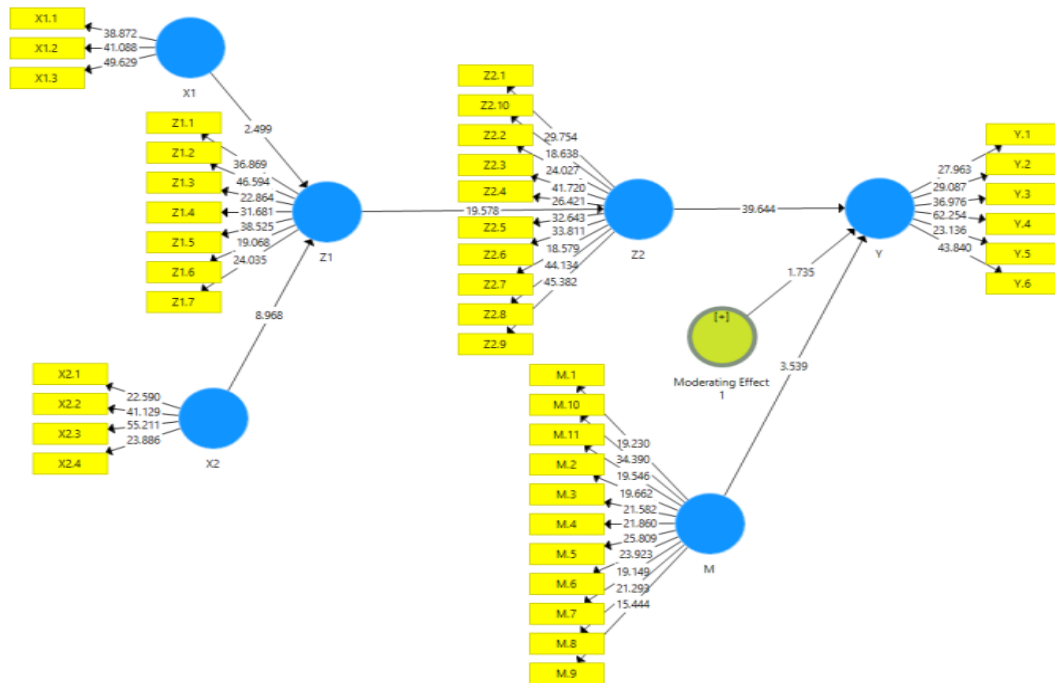
**Table 4.** Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability Values

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Information
Rural Livelihoods (X1)	0.858	0.912	Reliable
Regional Economic Potential (X2)	0.850	0.898	Reliable
Community Empowerment (Z1)	0.919	0.936	Reliable
Local Economic Development (Z2)	0.942	0.950	Reliable
Resource Dependency (M)	0.938	0.954	Reliable
Sustainable Rural Development (Y)	0.923	0.940	Reliable

Source: SmartPLS output

### Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model evaluation was conducted to examine the relationships among the latent variables proposed in the research framework and to test the formulated hypotheses. In Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling, the structural model assessment focuses on evaluating the predictive capability and the significance of the relationships between constructs. This evaluation includes the analysis of path coefficients, coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), effect size ( $f^2$ ), predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ), and hypothesis testing through bootstrapping procedures. The purpose of this stage is to determine the extent to which rural livelihoods, regional economic potential, community empowerment, local economic development, and resource dependency explain sustainable rural development. In addition, the structural model evaluation provides empirical evidence regarding the direct, indirect, and moderating effects among variables within the proposed conceptual framework.



**Figure 3.** PLS Bootstrapping

**Goodness-Fit Test**

Testing of the structural model is done by looking at the Rsquare value which is a goodness-fit test of the model.

**Tabel 5. R-Square Value**

Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Sustainable Rural Development(Y)	0.731	0.729
Community Empowerment(Z1)	0.439	0.436
Local Economic Development(Z2)	0.558	0.557

Source: SmartPLS output

Table 5. shows the R-Square value for variable Y obtained at 0.731. The R-Square value indicates that 73.1% of variable Y can be influenced by variables X1, X2, Z1, Z2 and the Moderator. While the remaining 26.9% is influenced by other variables outside the variables studied. The R-square values for variables Z1 and Z2 are 0.439 and 0.558. Thus, it can be stated that variables X1 and X2 influence Z1 by 43.9% and influence Z2 by 55.8%. Inner model or structural model testing is conducted to observe the relationship between the construct significance values and the R-square of the research model. The structural model is evaluated using the R-square for the dependent construct t-test and the significance of the structural path parameter coefficients.

**Predictive Relevance (Q2)**

Predictive relevance is used to measure how well a model and its parameter estimates produce conservation values. The Q2 value ranges from  $0 < Q2 < 1$ , with the closer it is to 1, the better the model. The Q2 value is equivalent to the total coefficient of determination in path analysis. Based on Table 5.4, the predictive relevance calculation is as follows.

$$\text{Nilai } Q^2 = 1 - (1 - R^2) \times (1 - R^1) \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

$$\text{Nilai } Q^2 = 1 - (1 - 0,729) \times (1 - 0,498) = 1 - (0,271 \times 0,502) = 0,8639 \dots\dots\dots(2)$$

Description :

Q<sup>2</sup> : nilai *Predictive Relevance*

R<sup>1</sup><sup>2</sup> : nilai *R-Square* variabel Z

R<sup>2</sup><sup>2</sup> : nilai *R-Square* variable

The calculation results revealed a Q<sup>2</sup> value of 0.863, indicating that 86.3% of the research data variability can be explained by the designed structural model, while the remaining 13.4% is explained by factors outside the model. Based on these results, the structural model in this study is considered good, as it is closer to 1.

### Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing aims to test the causal relationship developed in the model (thinking framework), namely the influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables. Hypothesis testing in this study uses the T-statistic value and significance value (p-value), where the assessment is that the T-statistic value must be greater than the T-table (1.96) and the p-value <0.05, then the hypothesis is declared accepted. The results of the hypothesis testing obtained based on the PLS booststrapping method. The result of the hypothesis test used in testing the hypothesis is the calculated t-value. Hypothesis testing can be done by comparing the calculated t-value with the t-table. The t-table value can be obtained from respondents, which ultimately results in a t-table of 1.960. However, if the p-value is used, the comparison value used is the error rate (α) of 5%.

The results of the research hypothesis testing are as follows:

**Table 6.** Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Correlation between variables	Direct Influence			Note
		Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	
H1	Rural Livelihoods-> Community Empowerment	0.148	2,499	0.013	Significant
H2	Regional Economic Potential-> Community Empowerment	0.560	8,968	0.000	Significant
H3	Community Empowerment -> Local Economic Development	0.747	9,578	0.000	Significant
H4	Local Economic Development-> Sustainable Rural Development	0.825	9,644	0.000	Significant
H5	Resource Dependency*Local Economic Development*Moderating effect) ->Sustainable Rural Development	-0.047	1,735	0.083	Not Significant

Source: SmartPLS output

Rural livelihood has a significant influence on community empowerment with a coefficient value of 0.418, a T-statistic value of 2,499, and a p-value of 0.010. Regional economic potential also has a significant influence on community empowerment with a coefficient value of 0.560, a T-statistic value of 8,968, and a p-value of 0.001. In addition, Community empowerment has a significant influence on local economic development with a coefficient value of 0.747, a T-statistic value of 9,578, and a p-value of 0.000. Local economic development shows the strongest influence on sustainable rural development with a coefficient value of 0.825, a T-statistic value of 9,644, and a p-value of 0.000. All these results indicate that the hypotheses H1, H2, H3, and H4 are accepted.

The results of the direct influence of local economic development on sustainable rural development moderated by resource dependency have a path coefficient value of -0.047, a t-statistic value of 1.735, and a p-value of 0.083. Considering that the t-statistic value (1.735) is smaller than the t-table value (1.96) and the p-value > 0.05. Empirically, this value indicates that resource dependency is unable to moderate the relationship between local

economic development and sustainable rural development. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 is rejected.

## 4. Discussion

### Rural Livelihoods and Community Empowerment

Hypothesis 1 was positive and significant: This finding confirms that rural livelihoods can encourage community empowerment in rural development. This finding is strongly aligned with Resource-Based View Theory. RBV Theory emphasizes that valuable, rare, and well-managed resources are the primary source of sustainable development and long-term competitiveness. In the rural context, rural livelihoods reflect the availability and utilization of strategic community resources, including human capital, social networks, natural resources, financial assets, and physical infrastructure. These resources enhance the capacity of rural communities to participate actively in decision-making, improve local skills and knowledge, strengthen collective action, and increase economic independence. As a result, stronger rural livelihoods create a foundation for community empowerment by enabling rural populations to mobilize their internal resources more effectively. This empowerment process ultimately supports the achievement of sustainable rural development through increased community participation, resilience, and local self-reliance.

According to the Sustainable Livelihoods framework, rural livelihoods depend on five main capitals: human, social, physical, financial, and natural.(Putri et al., 2025)In the context of Berau Regency, these livelihood assets can be illustrated using an "asset pentagon" to demonstrate the balance and strength of the resources held by the local community. The explanation can be paraphrased as follows: 1) Human capital in Berau Regency is reflected in education levels, skills, work capacity, and public health, particularly in rural and coastal areas. This potential serves as a crucial foundation for developing various livelihood strategies, such as agriculture, fisheries, and the service sector. 2) Social capital is evident in

the strength of community social networks, such as farmer and fisherman groups, and the well-maintained practice of mutual cooperation. Trust between residents and the existence of local institutions are crucial factors in encouraging community participation and empowerment. 3) Natural capital is one of Berau Regency's key strengths, boasting a wealth of natural resources such as coal mining, agricultural land, forest areas, marine waters, and rich biodiversity. This potential serves as a primary source of livelihood, but it also requires sustainable management to prevent environmental degradation. 4) Physical capital in Berau includes basic infrastructure such as roads, bridges, housing, sanitation, and transportation and communication facilities. The availability and quality of this infrastructure significantly determine people's access to markets, education, and other public services. 5) Financial capital encompasses community access to financial resources, such as savings, business credit, government assistance, and income from leading regional sectors. The availability of this capital plays a crucial role in supporting economic activity and improving community well-being.

In this context, community empowerment in Berau Regency occurs when communities are able to independently manage and integrate various types of capital. For example, leveraging social capital through fishing or farming groups can increase capacity (human capital) through training and mentoring, ultimately driving sustainable income growth (financial capital). (Bourton et al., 2002).

### **Regional Economic Potential and Community Empowerment**

Hypothesis 2 was positive and significant: This finding confirms that regional economic potential can encourage community empowerment in sustainable rural development. The finding is consistent with Resource-Based View Theory. RBV Theory explains that regions possessing valuable and strategically managed resources have greater capacity to create sustainable development and strengthen community capabilities. In the context of rural development, regional economic potential represents important local

resources such as natural resources, tourism potential, agricultural productivity, local industries, and cultural assets. When these resources are effectively managed and utilized, they create employment opportunities, increase community income, improve local skills, and strengthen social participation. This process encourages community empowerment by enhancing the ability of local communities to actively participate in economic activities and development decision-making. Therefore, regional economic potential serves as a strategic asset that supports empowerment and contributes to sustainable rural development through stronger local capacity and economic self-reliance.

Regional potential in regional economic development acts as an engine that provides structure and opportunities, while community empowerment ensures that rural communities are the primary drivers. (Hadiwibowo et al., 2023). Berau Regency has diverse economic potential, including agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and nature-based tourism (e.g., coastal and island areas). This potential is a strategic asset that can be utilized to enhance the well-being of rural communities if managed optimally. Utilizing this economic potential encourages active community involvement in productive activities, such as developing agricultural businesses, capture fisheries and aquaculture, and micro-enterprises and local tourism in Berau Villages. In this process, communities gain capacity through training, mentoring, and strengthening institutions such as farmer groups, fishermen groups, and village MSMEs. This strengthens the community's position as key actors in development, not simply beneficiaries.

Furthermore, optimizing regional economic potential in Berau Regency also encourages increased access to markets, technology, and financing sources. This has implications for increasing community economic independence and their ability to wisely manage local resources. When communities are able to manage their potential independently and collectively, the process of community empowerment will naturally develop. Thus, the regional economic potential in Berau Regency not only contributes to regional economic growth but also serves as a crucial foundation for creating empowered, independent, and

sustainable rural communities. Integrating local potential and community empowerment is key to achieving inclusive and sustainable rural development.

### **Community Empowerment and Local Economic Development**

Hypothesis 3 was positive and significant: This finding confirms that community empowerment can improve local economic development. The finding is closely related to Resource-Based View Theory. RBV Theory argues that sustainable development and competitive advantage are achieved through the effective utilization of internal resources and capabilities. Within the framework of rural development, community empowerment enhances the capacity of local communities by strengthening human capital, social capital, knowledge, skills, and collective participation. Empowered communities are more capable of managing local resources efficiently, developing entrepreneurial activities, creating innovation, and supporting productive economic initiatives. These strengthened capabilities contribute directly to local economic development by increasing employment opportunities, stimulating local businesses, improving income generation, and promoting economic sustainability. Therefore, community empowerment functions as a strategic intangible resource that enables rural communities to maximize their local potential and achieve long-term economic development.

Community empowerment plays a strategic role in encouraging local economic development (LED). Community empowerment enables individuals and groups in rural areas to increase their capacity, access to resources, and the ability to manage local economic potential independently and sustainably. According to Robert Chambers (1995), empowerment emphasizes increasing the community's ability to determine their own life choices, which ultimately impacts economic well-being.(Shi et al., 2025). In Berau Regency, community empowerment can be realized through strengthening leading sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, and locally resource-based MSMEs. This process includes skills training, strengthening local institutions (farmer and fisher groups), and improving access to

markets and financing. The World Bank (2021) confirms that community empowerment contributes to increased productivity and community income through active participation in economic activities. Thus, communities are not merely objects of development but also subjects who determine the direction of regional economic development.

Furthermore, community empowerment also strengthens local social and economic networks, which serve as the foundation for regional economic growth. According to Amartya Sen (1999), development should be viewed as a process of capability expansion, in which communities have the ability to participate fully in economic activities. (Steiner & Teasdale, 2019) In this context, increasing community capacity in Berau will impact the growth of productive businesses, create jobs, and increase local economic competitiveness. Thus, community empowerment in Berau Regency has proven effective in enhancing local economic development by strengthening community capacity, optimizing local potential, and increasing participation in economic activities. This aligns with findings from the United Nations Development Programme (2020), which stated that community empowerment is key to achieving inclusive and sustainable local economic development.

### **Local Economic Development and Sustainable Rural Development**

Hypothesis 4 was positive and significant: This finding confirms that local economic development can increase sustainable rural development efforts. The finding is supported by Resource-Based View Theory. RBV Theory emphasizes that sustainable development is achieved when communities are able to utilize and manage their internal resources and capabilities effectively to create long-term value and resilience. In the rural context, local economic development reflects the productive use of strategic local resources such as natural assets, human skills, local industries, entrepreneurship, and social networks. Through effective local economic activities, rural communities can generate employment opportunities, increase household income, strengthen local institutions, and improve economic independence. These outcomes enhance the village's capacity to sustain

development initiatives over time while reducing vulnerability to external economic pressures. Therefore, local economic development serves as a strategic capability that supports sustainable rural development by transforming local resources into long-term economic and social benefits.

Sustainable village development is strongly associated with the concept of Local Economic Development (LED). In the implementation of LED, village development should be carried out based on the village's characteristics and local potential, while also aiming to enhance the welfare of the local community. This aligns with the regional development concept proposed by Hirschman and Myrdal in 1958, which stated that regional development is essentially carried out by optimally utilizing natural resources through local economic development, namely based on the basic economic activities occurring in a region. (Kumari & Bhanoo, 2022).

Based on the results of interviews with respondents, several obstacles faced by rural areas in the Berau district in efforts to advance sustainable village development through local economic development, namely: 1) There are still many villages in Berau district that have limited resources such as human resources, capital, and infrastructure which are obstacles in developing businesses and encouraging economic growth. 2) Rural communities, especially those in remote villages, often struggle to access broader markets. The long distance from economic centers presents a challenge to distributing local village products. 3) The lack of capacity of village human resources in the utilization of village funds has hampered efforts to achieve village development goals. 4) Dependence on one sector of the village economy puts the community at risk of losing their main livelihood due to changes in market conditions or climate change. 5) There is still a lack of knowledge and skills among village communities in utilizing business opportunities and in managing existing businesses.

Utilization of regional wealth in each village area of Berau Regency needs to be developed in accordance with existing socio-economic potential to increase the economic activities of the population. (Medeiros, 2022) while still paying attention to environmental

and social aspects, so that equitable development can be realized through a sustainable local economic development process.

### **Resource Dependency in Moderating Local Economic Development Relationships and Sustainable Rural Development**

Hypothesis 5 was negative and not significant: This finding confirms that resource dependency can weaken the relationship between local economic development and improving sustainable rural development. This result may partially challenge or falsify the assumptions of Resource-Based View Theory. RBV Theory generally assumes that the effective utilization of valuable internal resources will strengthen organizational or regional performance and create sustainable competitive advantages. In terms of rural development, the theory suggests that local economic resources should contribute positively to sustainable rural development when managed effectively. However, this research finding indicates that high resource dependency may reduce the positive impact of local economic development on sustainability outcomes. Excessive dependence on limited or dominant resources—such as extractive industries, single commodities, or external financial support—can create economic vulnerability, reduce diversification, and weaken community resilience. As a result, local economic development may generate short-term economic gains but fail to produce long-term sustainable rural development.

This finding can therefore be interpreted as a limitation or falsification of RBV Theory because possessing valuable resources alone is not sufficient to guarantee sustainable development. The effectiveness of resources also depends on adaptive capacity, diversification, institutional strength, and the ability to manage dependency risks. Thus, the study extends RBV Theory by showing that resource dependency may act as a constraining factor that weakens the strategic value of local resources in achieving sustainability. Resource dependency (dependence on natural resources, such as mining, forestry, or fisheries) can weaken the relationship between local economic development (LED) and sustainable rural

development in Berau Regency. This can be explained through several recent theoretical and empirical arguments, as follows:

First, high dependence on natural resources tends to create a resource curse, where the economic structure becomes undiversified. Recent studies have shown that the dominance of the extractive sector can hinder local economic diversification, so that the benefits of economic development are not distributed evenly and sustainably. (Narh, 2025) In the Berau context, dependence on a particular sector can make LEDs short-term and vulnerable to fluctuations in global commodity prices. Second, resource dependency can also reduce the quality of local economic development itself. Research shows that dependence on natural resources is often associated with declining per capita income, increasing inequality, and poverty in rural areas. (Susanti & Rosid, 2026) This condition indicates that although economic activity has increased, the results have not optimally improved the welfare of the wider community, thus weakening the contribution of LED to sustainable rural development.

Third, from the perspective of Resource Dependence Theory, dependence on external resources creates a relationship of dependency and power inequality between local actors and external parties (large companies or the government). (Bakri et al., 2024) This can limit local communities' autonomy in managing resources and determining the direction of development. As a result, the resulting LED is not fully based on community needs and capacity, thus under-supporting sustainability. Fourth, recent studies also show that high dependency can lead to dependence on external assistance and weaken local initiatives, thus hindering the process of community empowerment. (Elagöz, M, Bal, 2025) In the long term, this condition makes rural development less self-sufficient and makes it difficult to achieve social and economic sustainability.

Thus, in the context of Berau Regency, resource dependency plays a moderating role that weakens the relationship between local economic development and sustainable rural development. This means that even if the LED increases, its impact on sustainable rural development will be less than optimal if the regional economy remains heavily dependent on

natural resource exploitation without diversification and strengthening local capacity. The insignificant relationship can be explained by the Berau Regency Government's current stance on solidifying a green economic transition to reduce dependence on coal by prioritizing the tourism and agriculture/plantation sectors. These sectors are being prepared as long-term economic pillars as unrennewable mining reserves decline.

## 5. Conclusion

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in extending and integrating Resource-Based View Theory and Resource Dependence Theory within the context of sustainable rural development. From the RBV perspective, the study confirms that rural livelihoods, regional economic potential, community empowerment, and local economic development function as strategic local resources and capabilities that can support sustainable rural development. The findings strengthen the argument that villages with stronger internal resources and community capacities are better able to achieve long-term development sustainability. However, this study also demonstrates that the effectiveness of local resources is not absolute. The moderating role of resource dependency shows that dependence on dominant external resources can weaken the contribution of local economic development toward sustainable rural development. This finding complements RBV Theory by emphasizing that valuable resources alone are insufficient without adaptive and independent resource management.

Furthermore, from the perspective of Resource Dependence Theory, dependence on external resources creates relationships of dependency and power inequality between local actors and external parties, such as large companies or the government. This condition can reduce the autonomy of local communities in managing resources and determining development priorities. As a consequence, local economic development may become less community-oriented and less aligned with local needs and capacities, thereby weakening its contribution to sustainable rural development. Therefore, this study contributes theoretically

by showing that sustainable rural development is influenced not only by the ownership of local resources, but also by the degree of community autonomy and the ability to reduce external dependency in development processes. The findings of this study provide important implications for the local government of Berau Regency in formulating sustainable rural development policies. First, the government needs to strengthen rural livelihoods by improving access to education, skills training, infrastructure, financial support, and sustainable natural resource management. Strengthening community assets and capacities can encourage greater community empowerment and improve the long-term resilience of rural communities.

Second, the significant role of regional economic potential indicates that the Berau local government should optimize local resources such as agriculture, fisheries, tourism, creative industries, and village-based micro-enterprises. Policies should emphasize not only economic growth but also greater community participation and local ownership in development initiatives. Community-based economic programs can strengthen empowerment and create more inclusive local economic development. Third, because community empowerment was found to positively influence local economic development, the government should encourage participatory development approaches by involving village communities in planning, decision-making, and resource management processes. Strengthening local institutions, cooperatives, village-owned enterprises (BUMDes), and entrepreneurship programs can improve economic independence and increase rural welfare.

Fourth, the finding that local economic development supports sustainable rural development suggests that development strategies in Berau should prioritize long-term sustainability rather than short-term economic gains. This includes promoting environmentally sustainable economic activities, diversifying local income sources, and strengthening rural economic resilience. Finally, the moderating role of resource dependency implies that the Berau government needs to reduce excessive dependence on external actors, extractive industries, or single-sector economic activities. High dependency on external

resources may weaken local autonomy and reduce the sustainability of development outcomes. Therefore, policies should encourage economic diversification, strengthen local control over resources, and increase community capacity to manage local development independently. Through these strategies, sustainable rural development in Berau can become more adaptive, participatory, and community-centered.

Future studies are recommended to broaden the conceptual model by including additional variables that may affect sustainable rural development, like governance quality, institutional capacity, innovation capability, environmental sustainability practices, social capital, and digital transformation in rural areas. These variables can offer insight into the factors that strengthen or weaken sustainable rural development outcomes. Future studies are also encouraged to explore resource dependency in a more comprehensive manner by distinguishing between different forms of dependency, including financial dependency, institutional dependency, political dependency, and dependency on extractive industries or external investors. This approach may provide more detailed insights into how various dependency structures influence local economic development and sustainability.

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