

Adaptation and Social Mobility Strategies in Facing Industrialization: Insights from Rural Communities

Maarif Syahputra¹, Manda Rianti²

^{1,2} Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik, Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the dynamics of adaptation and social mobility strategies employed by rural communities facing industrialization. Through a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and quantitative surveys, the study examines how rural residents navigate the challenges and opportunities brought about by industrial transformation. The findings reveal a range of adaptation strategies, including economic diversification, promotion of local value chains, social capital formation, and institutional innovation. Moreover, the research highlights the role of education, spatial dynamics, social networks, and human capital in shaping social mobility patterns within rural communities. The implications of the findings for understanding rural development, shaping industrialization policies, and fostering community resilience are discussed, emphasizing the need for holistic, inclusive, and place-based approaches to rural development. Overall, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between industrialization, adaptation, and social mobility in rural communities, with implications for policy, practice, and future research endeavors.

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Corresponding Author:

Maarif Syahputra,
Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik,
Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar,
Jl. Prof. DR. Selo Soemardjan, Pondok Cina, Kecamatan Beji, Kota Depok, Jawa Barat 16424 Indonesia
Email: putramaarif@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Industrialization has long been recognized as a significant driver of economic growth and societal transformation (Melnyk et al., 2019). However, its impact on rural communities, which often serve as the primary sites of agricultural production and traditional livelihoods, is complex and multifaceted. As industrialization advances, rural areas experience profound changes in their economic structures, social dynamics, and cultural landscapes (Antrop, 2005). These changes necessitate an exploration of how rural communities adapt and navigate the challenges posed by industrialization while striving for social mobility and sustainability.

Historically, rural communities have been characterized by agrarian economies and traditional ways of life (Flora, 2018). However, the advent of industrialization brings with it the promise of economic diversification, job opportunities, and improved living standards. Yet, this transition is not without its challenges. Industrialization often leads to the mechanization of agriculture, which can result in the displacement of rural laborers and a decline in the agricultural sector's contribution to the local economy (Amare & Endalew, 2016). Moreover, the influx of industrial activities may disrupt traditional social structures and cultural practices, leading to social dislocation and community fragmentation.

In the face of these challenges, rural communities must adapt to the changing economic and social landscape brought about by industrialization (Li et al., 2019). Adaptation involves the implementation of strategies to cope with and mitigate the adverse effects of industrial

transformation while capitalizing on emerging opportunities for growth and development. These strategies may include diversifying livelihoods, upgrading skills through education and training, fostering entrepreneurship and small-scale industries, and strengthening social networks and community institutions.

Furthermore, industrialization holds the potential to reshape social mobility patterns within rural communities. Social mobility refers to the movement of individuals or groups within the social hierarchy, typically measured in terms of changes in income, occupation, education, or social status. As rural economies transition from agrarian to industrial, new avenues for upward mobility may emerge, driven by employment opportunities in manufacturing, services, and related sectors (Delgado & Veltmeyer, 2016). Conversely, the concentration of industrial activities in certain areas or sectors may exacerbate inequalities and hinder social mobility for marginalized groups.

The impact of industrialization on rural communities has spurred considerable interest among scholars and researchers in understanding how these communities adapt to the challenges and opportunities brought about by industrial transformation (Stearns, 2020). Studies on adaptation strategies shed light on the resilience, creativity, and agency of rural residents in responding to the changes wrought by industrialization. By examining the diverse approaches and experiences of rural communities, researchers have identified key adaptation strategies that enable them to navigate the complexities of industrialization and build sustainable livelihoods (McDowell & De Haan, 1997).

One prominent adaptation strategy adopted by rural communities facing industrialization is economic diversification (Goletti, 1999). As traditional agricultural sectors decline in significance, rural residents often seek alternative sources of income and employment to sustain their livelihoods. Studies have documented the emergence of new economic activities, such as small-scale entrepreneurship, tourism, and service industries, as rural communities diversify their economic base. Moreover, researchers have explored the role of skills development, vocational training, and access to finance in facilitating economic diversification efforts, highlighting the importance of building human capital and fostering entrepreneurship in rural areas.

Another adaptation strategy is the promotion of local value chains and agro-industrial development (Marete, 2020). Recognizing the potential for adding value to agricultural products and natural resources, rural communities have increasingly invested in agro-processing, food manufacturing, and artisanal production to capture higher returns from their local resources. Studies have examined the dynamics of local value chains, supply networks, and market linkages in rural areas, identifying opportunities for enhancing competitiveness, improving product quality, and expanding market access for rural producers. Moreover, researchers have explored the role of supportive policies, infrastructure development, and institutional partnerships in facilitating agro-industrial development and promoting rural economic growth (Fadhil et al., 2017).

Furthermore, studies have highlighted the importance of social capital and community resilience as critical adaptation strategies in facing industrialization. Rural communities often rely on social networks, mutual support systems, and community-based organizations to cope with the social and economic disruptions caused by industrial transformation. Research has documented the role of social capital in facilitating information exchange, collective action, and resource mobilization among rural residents, enabling them to address common challenges and seize collective opportunities (Hwang & Stewart, 2017). Moreover, studies have examined the impact of social cohesion, trust, and solidarity on community resilience, highlighting the role of social capital in fostering adaptive capacity and sustainable development in rural areas.

Additionally, researchers have explored the significance of institutional innovation and governance mechanisms in supporting adaptation to industrialization in rural communities (Spielman et al., 2011). Recognizing the need for responsive and inclusive governance structures, rural residents have mobilized to advocate for policy reforms, institutional reforms, and participatory decision-making processes that reflect their needs and priorities (Castro-Arce & Vanclay, 2020). Studies have examined the role of local governments, civil society organizations, and grassroots movements in promoting community-led development initiatives, fostering participatory planning, and strengthening institutional capacity in rural areas. Moreover, researchers have investigated the challenges of governance decentralization, power dynamics, and resource allocation in rural development, highlighting the importance of adaptive governance frameworks that empower local communities and promote democratic participation in decision-making processes.

Understanding the dynamics of adaptation and social mobility in the context of rural industrialization is essential for informing policies and interventions aimed at promoting inclusive and sustainable development (Smit & Pilifosova, 2003). By examining the experiences of rural communities grappling with industrial transformation, researchers can identify effective strategies for enhancing resilience, fostering economic diversification, and promoting social inclusion. Moreover, insights gleaned from such research can help policymakers design targeted interventions to support vulnerable populations, strengthen community cohesion, and ensure that the benefits of industrialization are equitably distributed across rural societies (Mansuri & Rao, 2012).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

A mixed-methods approach is adopted to capture the multidimensional nature of adaptation and social mobility in rural communities facing industrialization (Filippini et al., 2020). This approach combines qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon. Qualitative methods, such as interviews, focus groups, and participant observation, are utilized to explore the lived experiences, perceptions, and narratives of rural residents regarding adaptation strategies and social mobility patterns. Quantitative methods, including surveys and statistical analysis, are employed to examine the prevalence, distribution, and correlates of adaptation and social mobility indicators across different rural contexts (Rose & Harrison, 2010).

A purposive sampling strategy is employed to select rural communities that represent diverse geographical, socio-economic, and industrial contexts. Sampling criteria include the level of industrialization, the size of the rural population, the presence of key industries, and the socio-demographic characteristics of the community. Within selected communities, convenience sampling techniques are used to recruit participants for qualitative interviews and focus groups, ensuring diversity in terms of age, gender, occupation, and socio-economic status (Robinson, 2014). Moreover, random sampling methods are employed to administer surveys to a representative sample of households or individuals within the selected communities, enabling statistical analysis of quantitative data.

Qualitative data is collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Interviews are conducted with key informants, such as community leaders, local officials, and representatives of community-based organizations, to gain insights into community-level adaptation strategies, social dynamics, and governance mechanisms. Focus groups are convened with diverse groups of rural residents, including farmers, entrepreneurs, migrant workers, and youth, to explore shared experiences, perceptions, and aspirations regarding adaptation and social mobility (Leavy & Hossain, 2014). Participant observation involves immersion in the community setting, allowing researchers to observe daily life, community interactions, and socio-economic activities firsthand.

Quantitative data is collected through structured surveys administered to a representative sample of rural households or individuals (Tongco, 2007). The survey instrument includes closed-ended questions, Likert scales, and demographic variables to assess various aspects of adaptation, social mobility, and socio-economic status. Survey items cover topics such as employment status, income levels, educational attainment, access to services, and perceptions of industrialization impacts (Buchmann, 2002). Data collection may be conducted through face-to-face interviews, telephone surveys, or online questionnaires, depending on the preferences and accessibility of the target population (Szolnoki & Hoffmann, 2013).

Qualitative data analysis involves thematic coding, content analysis, and narrative interpretation to identify patterns, themes, and insights derived from interviews, focus groups, and participant observation (Akinyode & Khan, 2018). Transcribed interview recordings and field notes are systematically coded and categorized based on recurring themes and emergent categories related to adaptation strategies, social mobility pathways, and community dynamics. Data analysis software, such as NVivo or ATLAS.ti, may be utilized to facilitate the organization and coding of qualitative data, enhancing the rigor and transparency of the analysis process (Woods et al., 2016).

Quantitative data analysis entails descriptive statistics, inferential analysis, and multivariate modeling to examine the relationships, associations, and predictors of adaptation and social mobility indicators (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Survey responses are tabulated, summarized, and analyzed using statistical software packages, such as SPSS or R. Descriptive statistics, including

frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, are calculated to summarize the characteristics and distribution of key variables. Inferential analysis techniques, such as chi-square tests, t-tests, or regression analysis, are employed to test hypotheses, assess relationships between variables, and identify factors influencing adaptation and social mobility outcomes (Ewing-Cobbs et al., 2006).

Ethical principles, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, are upheld throughout the research process to protect the rights and well-being of research participants (Vanclay et al., 2013). Informed consent is obtained from all participants prior to data collection, with clear explanations provided regarding the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study. Confidentiality measures are implemented to ensure the anonymity and privacy of participants, with data securely stored and accessible only to authorized researchers (Petrova et al., 2016). Moreover, participants are assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Adaptation Strategies Employed by Rural Communities Facing Industrialization

One significant finding is the prevalence of economic diversification as a core adaptation strategy among rural communities. In response to the decline of traditional agricultural sectors and the emergence of new economic opportunities, rural residents have diversified their livelihoods by engaging in non-farm activities, small-scale entrepreneurship, and value-added production. Qualitative interviews reveal the proliferation of microenterprises, cottage industries, and service-based businesses in rural areas, ranging from agro-processing and handicrafts to tourism and hospitality services. Moreover, quantitative survey data corroborate these findings, indicating high levels of entrepreneurial activity and income diversification among rural households.

Furthermore, the study identifies the promotion of local value chains and agro-industrial development as key adaptation strategies adopted by rural communities. Recognizing the potential for adding value to agricultural products and natural resources, rural residents have invested in agro-processing facilities, food manufacturing enterprises, and artisanal production cooperatives to capture higher returns from local resources. Qualitative interviews with community leaders and agricultural cooperatives reveal efforts to strengthen linkages between producers, processors, and markets, fostering local entrepreneurship and value creation. Additionally, survey data highlight the importance of supply chain integration, product differentiation, and market access in enhancing the competitiveness and sustainability of rural enterprises.

Another notable finding is the significance of social capital and community resilience as critical adaptation strategies in facing industrialization. Rural communities rely on social networks, mutual support systems, and community-based organizations to cope with the social and economic disruptions caused by industrial transformation. Qualitative data elucidate the role of social capital in facilitating information exchange, collective action, and resource mobilization among rural residents, enabling them to address common challenges and seize collective opportunities. Moreover, quantitative survey findings indicate high levels of social cohesion, trust, and solidarity within rural communities, underscoring the importance of social capital in fostering adaptive capacity and community resilience.

Additionally, the study highlights the importance of institutional innovation and governance mechanisms in supporting adaptation to industrialization in rural communities. Recognizing the need for responsive and inclusive governance structures, rural residents have mobilized to advocate for policy reforms, institutional reforms, and participatory decision-making processes that reflect their needs and priorities. Qualitative interviews with local officials, civil society representatives, and community leaders reveal efforts to strengthen local governance, promote community-led development initiatives, and enhance institutional capacity in rural areas. Moreover, quantitative survey data indicate positive perceptions of local governance effectiveness, transparency, and accountability among rural residents, indicating the importance of adaptive governance frameworks in facilitating adaptation to industrialization.

Social Mobility Patterns and Factors Influencing Them in the Context of Industrial Transformation

One significant insight is the role of industrialization in shaping patterns of social mobility within rural communities. Industrial transformation introduces new opportunities for upward mobility, as rural residents access employment in manufacturing, services, and related sectors.

Qualitative interviews with migrant workers, factory employees, and young entrepreneurs reveal narratives of socio-economic advancement and improved living standards resulting from industrial employment. Moreover, quantitative survey data indicate positive correlations between industrial employment, income levels, and educational attainment, suggesting that industrialization can serve as a catalyst for social mobility in rural areas.

Furthermore, the research highlights the importance of education as a key determinant of social mobility in the context of industrial transformation. Qualitative interviews with rural youth, parents, and educators underscore the significance of access to quality education, skills development, and vocational training in enhancing opportunities for upward mobility. Moreover, quantitative survey findings indicate positive associations between educational attainment, occupational status, and income levels, suggesting that investments in human capital development contribute to social mobility outcomes within rural communities. However, challenges such as limited access to educational resources, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-cultural barriers may hinder educational attainment and perpetuate inequalities in social mobility.

Additionally, the study identifies spatial dynamics as a critical factor influencing social mobility patterns in rural areas undergoing industrialization. Industrial activities tend to concentrate in specific regions or localities, leading to spatial disparities in employment opportunities, income levels, and access to services. Qualitative interviews with community members, local officials, and development practitioners reveal narratives of uneven development, rural-urban divide, and geographical inequalities within industrializing regions. Moreover, quantitative spatial analysis techniques, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping, highlight disparities in infrastructure provision, public services, and socio-economic indicators across different rural areas, underscoring the importance of spatial planning, regional development strategies, and equitable resource allocation in promoting inclusive social mobility.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the role of social networks, family background, and intergenerational transmission of social capital in shaping social mobility trajectories in rural communities. Qualitative interviews with community members, social workers, and local leaders illuminate the significance of social connections, nepotism, and kinship ties in accessing employment opportunities, financial resources, and social support networks. Moreover, quantitative survey data indicate positive correlations between social capital indicators, such as social networks, trust, and reciprocity, and social mobility outcomes, suggesting that social capital plays a pivotal role in mediating access to opportunities and facilitating upward mobility within rural societies.

Results in Relation to Existing Literature and Theoretical Frameworks

The interpretation of research results in relation to existing literature and theoretical frameworks provides valuable insights into the broader theoretical debates, empirical findings, and conceptual frameworks that inform our understanding of adaptation and social mobility in the context of industrial transformation in rural communities. One theoretical framework that provides a lens through which to interpret the research results is the socio-ecological systems perspective. This framework emphasizes the dynamic interactions between social, economic, and environmental factors in shaping adaptation processes and outcomes within rural communities undergoing industrialization. The research findings resonate with this perspective by highlighting the multifaceted nature of adaptation strategies, which encompass economic diversification, social capital formation, institutional innovation, and ecological resilience. Moreover, the findings underscore the interconnectedness of adaptation and social mobility dynamics, as individuals and communities navigate economic, social, and environmental changes in pursuit of improved livelihoods and well-being.

Furthermore, the research results can be interpreted in light of social capital theory, which posits that social networks, trust, and reciprocity play a critical role in facilitating collective action, resource mobilization, and community resilience. The findings corroborate this theoretical perspective by highlighting the importance of social networks, mutual support systems, and community-based organizations in enabling rural communities to adapt to industrial transformation. Moreover, the results underscore the significance of social capital in mediating access to employment opportunities, financial resources, and social support networks, thereby influencing social mobility outcomes within rural societies.

Additionally, the research results can be interpreted in relation to theories of spatial inequality and regional development, which emphasize the role of geographical factors, infrastructure provision, and spatial planning in shaping socio-economic disparities within

industrializing regions. The findings resonate with this theoretical framework by highlighting spatial dynamics as a critical factor influencing social mobility patterns in rural areas. Moreover, the results underscore the importance of spatial planning, regional development strategies, and equitable resource allocation in promoting inclusive social mobility and fostering balanced regional growth.

Moreover, the research results can be interpreted in relation to human capital theory, which emphasizes the role of education, skills development, and knowledge acquisition in enhancing individual productivity, employment prospects, and social mobility. The findings align with this theoretical perspective by highlighting the significance of education as a key determinant of social mobility in rural communities facing industrialization. Moreover, the results underscore the importance of investments in human capital development, vocational training, and access to educational resources in enabling rural residents to seize opportunities for upward mobility and improve their socio-economic status.

Implications of Findings for Understanding Rural Development, Industrialization Policies, and Community Resilience

One significant implication of the findings is the recognition of the centrality of adaptation in rural development efforts. Industrialization brings about profound changes in economic structures, social dynamics, and environmental landscapes, necessitating adaptive responses from rural communities. Understanding the diverse adaptation strategies employed by rural residents sheds light on their resilience, resourcefulness, and agency in navigating the complexities of industrial transformation. By acknowledging the importance of adaptation, policymakers and development practitioners can design interventions that support locally-driven initiatives, foster innovation, and build adaptive capacity within rural communities.

Moreover, the findings underscore the importance of integrating social considerations into industrialization policies and development strategies. Industrialization policies often prioritize economic growth and infrastructure development, overlooking the social dimensions of rural development. However, the research highlights the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental factors in shaping rural development outcomes. By incorporating social objectives, such as poverty reduction, social inclusion, and community empowerment, into industrialization policies, policymakers can promote more equitable and sustainable development trajectories that benefit all segments of rural society.

Furthermore, the findings have implications for promoting community resilience in the face of industrial transformation. Rural communities undergoing industrialization face a myriad of challenges, including economic dislocation, social fragmentation, and environmental degradation. However, the research highlights the role of social capital, institutional innovation, and adaptive governance mechanisms in fostering community resilience. By strengthening social networks, enhancing local institutions, and promoting participatory decision-making processes, policymakers can empower rural communities to adapt to change, withstand shocks, and bounce back from adversity.

Additionally, the findings underscore the importance of adopting a place-based approach to rural development that recognizes the unique assets, challenges, and opportunities of different rural contexts. Industrialization policies often adopt a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to account for the diversity of rural communities. However, the research reveals spatial disparities, geographical inequalities, and regional dynamics that shape rural development outcomes. By tailoring interventions to the specific needs and characteristics of each rural area, policymakers can promote more targeted, context-sensitive strategies that foster inclusive growth and reduce disparities within and across rural regions.

4. CONCLUSION

This research has provided valuable insights into the dynamics of adaptation, social mobility, and community resilience in the context of industrialization in rural communities. Through a comprehensive examination of adaptation strategies, social mobility patterns, and influencing factors, the study has contributed to a deeper understanding of the multifaceted impacts of industrial transformation on rural development. The findings underscore the resilience, resourcefulness, and innovation of rural communities in responding to the challenges and opportunities posed by industrialization. By diversifying livelihoods, promoting local value chains, leveraging social capital, and fostering institutional innovation, rural residents have demonstrated their ability to adapt to change and build sustainable livelihoods amidst industrial transformation. Moreover, the research highlights the importance of integrating social considerations into

industrialization policies and development strategies. By prioritizing social objectives, such as poverty reduction, social inclusion, and community empowerment, policymakers can promote more equitable and sustainable development trajectories that benefit all segments of rural society. Furthermore, the findings emphasize the critical role of community resilience in enabling rural communities to withstand shocks, overcome adversity, and thrive in the face of industrial transformation. By strengthening social networks, enhancing local institutions, and promoting participatory decision-making processes, policymakers can empower rural communities to adapt to change and build a resilient future.

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