

Heritage Education and Livelihood Satisfaction in Indian Rural Communities: Towards Sustainable Development

Narmadha Velu¹ and A. Anuradha^{2*}

¹ VIT Business School, PhD Research Scholar of VIT Business School, Vellore Institute of Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu - 600127, India;

² VIT Business School, Faculty of Marketing, Vellore Institute of Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu - 600127, India.;

Corresponding author*: e-mail: anuradha.a@vit.ac.in.

ABSTRACT: *Objective:* The research article examines rural host communities' livelihood satisfaction through quality-of-life dimensions, considering the four competing hypotheses: "tourism infrastructure facilities," "entrepreneurial self-efficacy," "community well-being," "individual prosperity," and the moderating effect of "heritage education." *Method:* The study is performed on a randomly selected sample of 874 people residing in rural parts of South India. To analyze the effects of the suggested model, which aims to assess the livelihood satisfaction of rural people by examining the repercussions of heritage education on their quality of life, structural equation modelling (SEM) is employed. *Findings:* The results of the SEM demonstrate that factors affecting quality of life are essential in promoting livelihood satisfaction among people living in rural areas. Additionally, research reveals that heritage education moderates the relationship between quality-of-life components and livelihood satisfaction in rural host communities. *Implications:* This research's results and implications highlight the need for rural tourism planners to surpass traditional methods in achieving tourism and community development, by incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and enhancing the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities through heritage education. This research also provides useful insights for studying heritage education, which is critical for cultural identification and pride, preserving history and customs, and stimulating creativity and innovation in art, literature, and architecture. The research also sheds light on the consequences of safeguarding rural communities' cultural and traditional treasures while guaranteeing their economic stability and social cohesion through heritage education. Encouraging rural communities and tourists to engage in heritage education is critical for enabling conservation initiatives, strengthening tourism offers, increasing visitor numbers, and improving crisis management capacities. The concept of heritage education is crucial for enhancing the satisfaction of rural communities' livelihoods and addressing the existing research gap.

Keywords: Rural tourism, rural host communities, livelihood satisfaction, heritage education, quality of life.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism developments and activities greatly influence destination improvement and local population happiness, especially in rural regions [1]. Understanding the role of tourism in promoting community development in rural destinations is crucial for assessing the potential benefits of rural tourism [2]. The majority of tourism literature emphasizes rural tourism as a significant aspect of economic development [2] or environmental concern [3]. People view tourism in rural regions as the most sustainable business, promoting economic development in rural communities while minimizing adverse social and environmental effects [4]. The discipline of rural tourism is a multidisciplinary area of research that has garnered significant attention due to a recent surge in qualitative studies. Nevertheless, there is a shortage of causal studies that

are necessary to improve rural destinations' planning, management, and marketing strategies, as well as the satisfaction of host communities, thereby equipping them to effectively address sector challenges [5]. The absence of a definitive and universally acknowledged delineation of rural tourism stems from its intricate nature, which involves a diverse array of activities and exhibits variations depending on the specific location and nation. Rural tourism encompasses a wide array of activities, amenities, attractions, promotional efforts, transit options, and information services [6]. Rural tourism in India is in the developmental phase. The vision statement of Rural Tourism, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India is to "Leverage India's rural heritage in creating a vibrant and responsible tourism segment by creating engaging rural experiences, thereby promoting indigenous jobs, and preserving local culture and heritage." Today, India's rural economy accounts for 46 percent of national revenue, with 68 percent of the population, 64 percent of total spending, and 33 percent of savings [7]. Indian communities have diverse crafts, music, and dance traditions. They have also created farms and agricultural methods. The climate is pleasant, and there are many places to visit, including heritage monuments, village activities, businesses, learning arts, and rural farm stays [7].

Tourism, as a sector focused on promoting happiness, holds practical importance in improving the overall feeling of joy for both tourists and locals in destinations of interest [8]. Several elements and situations determine the quality of life. It encompasses different aspects such as health, material possessions, spirituality, job satisfaction, family, social interactions, leisure activities, and environmental conditions [9]. The concept of the "joyful host" is the key factor for the sustained prosperity of the tourism industry [9]. When rural host communities see that tourism development may improve their well-being, they tend to promote it more [10, 11].

Heritage education involves both understanding historical events for future application and acknowledging current practices that impact the present and will shape the future. Heritage may be essentially categorized into three types: cultural heritage, natural heritage, and digital heritage [14]. Cultural heritage is categorized into two main types: tangible cultural heritage, which consists of physical objects that can be stored and touched, such as temples, pyramids, and public monuments; and intangible cultural heritage, which encompasses non-physical elements that can be recorded but not physically interacted with, such as rituals, dance, singing, myths, beliefs, knowledge systems, and storytelling. Natural heritage includes exceptional physical, biological, and geological structures, as well as environments that support endangered animal and plant species, as well as regions of scientific, conservation, or aesthetic significance. Digital heritage refers to the dissemination and retrieval of historical information via the Internet [14]. Rural host communities have a unique aptitude for enhancing the skills of craftsmen in several fields, such as traditional crafts, music, dance folklore, and oral traditions. These cultural practices not only develop a sense of communal identity but also serve to promote rural tourism. The concept under discussion is "heritage education." Heritage education can be defined as a cognitive process through which individuals acquire knowledge about heritage assets [12]. Heritage education that involves all relevant stakeholders enhances understanding of the researched heritage and creates influential learning settings [13]. Over the past century, heritage education has become more important in the Indian education system [14]. Prior research has assessed rural host communities' quality of life by examining their satisfaction with several dimensions of community welfare [15], including rural host communities' happiness in life [9], capacity building [16], perceived social impacts [17], and tourism impact [18].

In this context, the research article examines the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities through quality-of-life dimensions, considering four competing hypotheses: "tourism infrastructure facilities," "entrepreneurial self-efficacy," "community well-being," "individual prosperity," and the moderating effect of "heritage education." Encouraging rural communities and tourists to engage in heritage education is critical for enabling conservation initiatives, strengthening tourism offers, increasing visitor numbers, and improving crisis management capacities. The concept of heritage education is crucial for enhancing the satisfaction of rural communities' livelihoods and addressing the existing research gap. The present research used a combination of integrated quality of life theory, social exchange theory, and sustainable development theory in its conceptual framework. Initial testing of the questionnaire's accuracy was conducted using reliability and validity analyses. After the precision test, we evaluated the casual associations of the data using structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis.

Notwithstanding the growing emphasis on tourism as a driver of economic growth in rural regions, there exists a dearth of a thorough comprehension of the elements that contribute to the contentment of residents

in their livelihoods. The lack of understanding in this area has resulted in uneven results in development projects based on tourism, as many rural communities have seen improved economic circumstances while others have reported neither significant advantages nor adverse consequences. The research seeks to fill the knowledge gap and obtain a deeper understanding of how quality-of-life aspects, specifically heritage education, affect the satisfaction of rural host communities. The ultimate objective is to protect and preserve the heritage and traditional values of these communities, ensuring their conservation for future generations. The research questions are:

1. What are the fundamental ideas that contribute to the satisfaction of rural host communities' livelihoods via the quality of life, as seen by host communities in rural southern India?
2. Can the implementation of heritage education have a positive impact on rural host communities' livelihood satisfaction?

The current study structure is literature review in Section II, background theory in Section III, discussion in Section IV, and conclusion in Section V.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. QUALITY OF LIFE AND LIVELIHOOD SATISFACTION OF RURAL HOST COMMUNITIES

In India, rural tourism is a specialized form of tourism that focuses on exploring and immersing oneself in the rural lifestyle and culture. This experience includes visiting remote regions, participating in various activities such as agriculture and craftsmanship, and exploring the village to gain a deeper understanding of the indigenous culture and lifestyle. India's multifaceted and dynamic culture, handicrafts, traditional crafts, celebrations, and fairs are the foundation of its rural tourism potential. Grand View Research, a market research organization based in the United States, projects agritourism to experience a Compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 11.4% from 2024 to 2030 [7].

Geographically speaking, the standard of living encompasses the idea of personal well-being, such as physical health, meaning full social relationships, security, and positive emotions, with a greater emphasis on the locations in which people live [19]. Livelihood satisfaction and quality of life are interconnected ideas that have a reciprocal impact on each other. An enriching occupation enhances one's standard of living by enabling people to fulfil their fundamental requirements, pursue personal passions, and engage in social and cultural endeavor's [20]. The quality of life in tourism is often linked to various factors, including welfare, amenities, life satisfaction, meeting basic needs, prosperity, the ability to live well, personal growth [8], poverty [18], living standards [21], well-being [15], social aspects [22], human deprivation and mental health, [23] and the promotion of entrepreneurship [24]. Prior research indicates that those who hold a favorable view of tourism experiences have increased civic pride, improved mental and personal well-being [25], and enhanced living standards [26]. In their research, [27] analyzed the factors that influence an individual's quality of life by assessing their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Previous research has established a connection between rural host communities' life satisfaction and quality of life [28]. Previous research evaluated rural host communities' quality of life by taking into account their general social satisfaction [29], physical well-being, safety and welfare, and emotional attachment to their surroundings [26]. This includes factors such as satisfaction with community resources, the state of the community environment, and rural host communities' dedication to society [30]. This study examines the impact of entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) and sustainable agriculture practices on the quality of life of inhabitants. Researchers have not extensively studied this particular topic. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) symbolizes the human being's level of confidence in their ability to effectively carry out the several duties and responsibilities associated with entrepreneurship [31]. People widely recognize ESE as a crucial factor in determining one's tendency to start a new enterprise. It encompasses an intricate network of interrelated beliefs about an individual's capability to accomplish entrepreneurial objectives [32-33]. Sustainable agricultural practices are a set of approaches and procedures that aim to improve agricultural systems' long-term production, environmental health, and social well-being while limiting any harmful effects on ecosystems and communities [35]. Various international projects promote sustainable farming options as the basis for worldwide changes in agricultural methods, including the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals [36]. Sustainable agriculture can bring numerous benefits to the quality of life for rural host communities [36]. The growth of rural tourism

has transformed the livelihood capital and original strategies of local rural families [37]. The present emphasis of sustainable livelihoods research is on promoting sustainable livelihoods in rural tourist areas [38]. Prior research has evaluated tourism and QoL using tourism carrying capacity [51], tourism development [4], responsible tourism [28, 29], tourism economic growth [21], indigenous tourism [56] and sustainable tourism development [28]. Therefore, it is evident that the use of tourism as a community resource, the state of the community's environment, economic improvement, and the commitment of rural host communities to society consistently influence people's contentment with their lives and the quality of their lives.

1.1 Hypotheses Development for Direct Effect

In the current study, researchers have adopted a comprehensive approach to measuring QoL. The researcher intentionally adopted and developed the components by drawing from previous literature utilizing the components of quality of life. The research variables are (1) tourism infrastructure facilities, (2), entrepreneurial self-efficacy (3) community well-being, (4) prosperity of individuals, and finally (5) sustainable agricultural practices of rural host communities. Table 1 gives a detailed description of the measurement variables and contributors. Based on the objectives, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

- **Hypothesis 1:** Tourism infrastructure facilities greatly impact the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities.
- **Hypothesis 2:** Entrepreneurial self-efficacy greatly impacts the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities.
- **Hypothesis 3:** Community well-being greatly impacts the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities.
- **Hypothesis 4:** The prosperity of individuals greatly impacts the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities.
- **Hypothesis 5:** Sustainable agricultural practices greatly impact the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities.

2. ROLE OF HERITAGE EDUCATION

Heritage covers a wide range of aspects, including moveable, immovable, tangible, and intangible elements [12]. Within the field of social sciences, the meaning of legacy and education is subject to intense debate. Heritage education has developed into a study topic that encompasses several academic areas and has had a worldwide impact over the last two decades [39]. Heritage education is a comprehensive strategy that seeks to promote knowledge, comprehension, and admiration for the cultural legacy of a certain community, area, or culture. Heritage conservation involves a diverse array of actions and tactics that are focused on safeguarding, explaining, and passing on both the physical and non-physical elements of heritage to current and future generations [40]. Prior research has been conducted in various areas of heritage, including historic house museums [41], historical thinking [40], geography and history [12], technologies for heritage education [43], archaeological heritage [13], and the conceptualization, utility, knowledge, value, and contextualisation of teaching heritage education [12]. Recent studies have focused on augmented reality for heritage education [44] and virtual experiences [45]. The current study concentrates on the novel concepts of heritage education, encompassing tourism activities inherited from past generations, including farming, pottery making, weaving, textile dyeing, doll manufacturing, crafting, ceramic tile production, fishing, and preparing traditional dishes in rural regions. The study investigates how heritage education moderates the relationship between livelihood satisfaction and quality of life in rural host communities. The objectives include the protection and preservation of heritage education, fostering cultural interchange between rural host communities and visitors, facilitating experiential learning and information transfer from local inhabitants to tourists, providing long-lasting possibilities through heritage education, and offering capacity-enhancing training.

2.1 Hypotheses Development for Moderation Effect

According to prior research, understanding the tangible and intangible cultural heritage assets and the moderation role of heritage education played in the quality of life and livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities. Table 1 gives a detailed description of the measurement variables and contributors. Based on an overview of the existing literature, the researchers proposed the following hypotheses:

- **Hypothesis 1a:** Heritage education moderates the association between tourism infrastructure facilities and the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities.
- **Hypothesis 2a:** Heritage education moderates the association between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities.
- **Hypothesis 3a:** Heritage education moderates the association between community well-being and livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities.
- **Hypothesis 4a:** Heritage education moderates the association between the prosperity of individuals and the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities.
- **Hypothesis 5a:** Heritage education moderates the association between sustainable agricultural practices and livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities.

III. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The predominant emphasis in quality-of-life theories revolves around the concept of satisfaction. The Integrative Quality of Life (IQOL) theory, as proposed by [46], covers three dimensions. (1) Existential quality of life is an individual's intrinsic quality and depth; (2) Objective quality of life is an outward perspective; and (3) Subjective quality of life refers to a holistic assessment of their livelihood satisfaction.

According to Social Exchange Theory, people or communities participate in a reciprocal process of swapping support for initiatives to reap the advantages of such activities. The community's level of support for tourism primarily depends on the benefits they currently receive or anticipate from this sector. Rural host communities in a town make decisions about their support for tourist projects by carefully examining the economic, social, cultural, and environmental considerations [330, 3]. The sustainable development theory emerged in the 1980s, with an emphasis on the integrated development of the economy, society, and environment. Sustainable development (SD) is becoming a crucial approach to steering the global social and economic transition. The SD theory offers an extensive foundation for tackling the intricate and interrelated difficulties that human beings are currently dealing with. Its objective is to foster a future that is fairer, more resilient, and more affluent for everyone [47].

Research in the social sciences has used livelihood theories to examine how people and their communities maintain their sources of income and navigate through various limitations. Social research has widely employed livelihood theories to gain insights into and analyze the methods and dynamics of individuals' livelihoods, particularly in rural regions [37]. This article uses a conceptual framework based on the aforementioned theories to understand how heritage education in "rural host communities" assesses quality-of-life dimensions and overall livelihood satisfaction. Sustainable development theory was also implemented to show the interconnections between SDGs and rural host communities for improving the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities through heritage education. The study also suggests practical implications for the growth of rural tourism. The following formulation of the study's objectives serves to validate the aforementioned framework:

1. To determine the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities through quality-of-life dimensions.
2. This study aims to assess the moderation role played by heritage education in the association between livelihood satisfaction and quality-of-life dimensions of rural host communities.
3. To provide implications (both theoretical and practical) for achieving sustainable development goals by improving the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities through heritage education.

IV. PROPOSED MODEL

This study uses a conceptual framework to determine the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities through quality-of-life dimensions and the moderation role played by heritage education in the association between livelihood satisfaction and quality-of-life dimensions of rural host communities. The

Conceptual Framework depicted in Figure 1 illustrates the correlation between the quality of life and livelihood satisfaction of host communities and the influence of heritage education as a moderating factor.

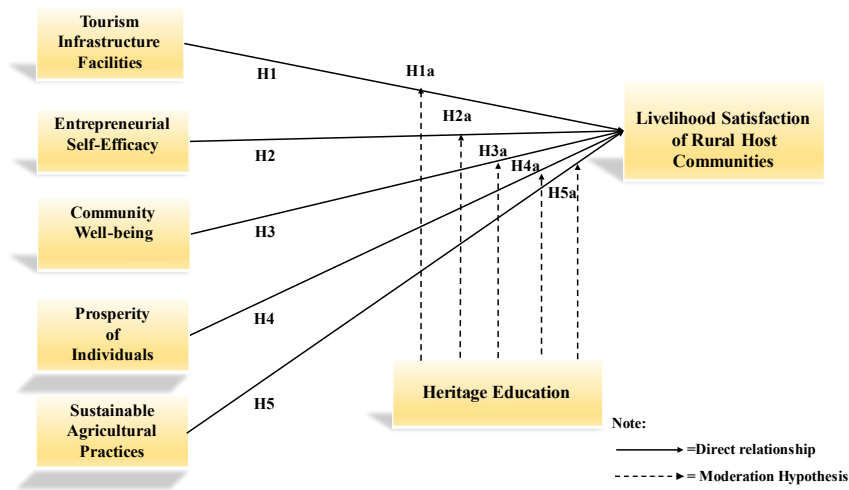


FIGURE 1. Conceptual framework (authors compilations)

V. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The current study uses a descriptive research methodology to collect information to create precise predictions regarding a certain challenge or assumption and to understand relationships between variables. Structural equation modelling (SEM) is a mathematical analytic technique used to investigate the interrelationships among variables in a multivariate framework. The ability of SEM to evaluate theories about correlations between observable (measured) and latent variables is one of its essential features. The analysis combines factor analysis and path analysis to establish, estimate and test the causal relationships within a model [48]. Figure 2 gives a graphical overview of the framework of research methodology carried over in the study.

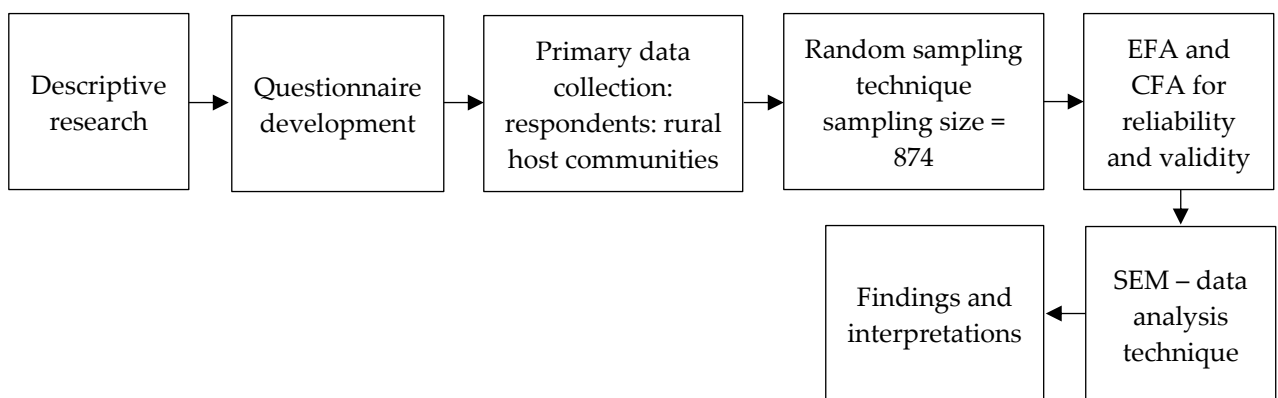


FIGURE 2. Research methodology framework

1. MEASURES

The current study sourced all 28 measurement items from existing literature to examine the relationship among selected variables. The necessary adjustments were made to analyses the relationship among the selected variables. The survey utilized a five-point Likert scale, where a rating of 1 indicated strongly

disagreeing and a rating of 5 indicated strongly agreeing. Table I displays the sources used for the measurement tools.

Table 1. Source of measurements and items. (Source: Authors Compilation)

Variables	Components	Contributors
Quality of Life Dimensions	1. Tourism infrastructure facilities (Accessibility & Accommodation, Information and Communication Centres, Health & Safety, Recreation Amenities) SDGs: Goal 3, Goal 11.	[19]; [28]; [18]; [36]; [35]; [22]; [23]; [24]; [25]; [15]; [17]; [49]; [50]; [51]; [52]; [53]; [54]; [55]; [56].
	2. Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy (Entrepreneurial knowledge and skills, Persistence and resilience, Innovation and creation of new ventures & Risk-taking efforts) SDGs: Goal 9.	
	3. Community well-being (Community Equity, Community life, Community environment, Community empowerment) SDGs: Goal 1, Goal 2, Goal 3, Goal 5, Goal 10, Goal 17.	
	4. Prosperity of individuals (Economic Growth, Cultural and Artistic Expression, Tourism Prosperity, Access to Finance) SDGs: Goal 8.	
Livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities	Standard of living, work-life, social life, Technology support. SDGs: Goal 3, Goal 16, Goal 17.	[26]; [30]; [22]; [53]; [25]; [19]; [57] [58].
Heritage Education	Traditional agricultural practices, Cultural exchange, Experiential learning, Enduring opportunities, Capacity building. SDGs: Goal 4.	[12]; [19]; [42]; [13].

2. DATA COLLECTION

The study's statistical population comprises individuals residing in rural areas of south India. The demographic data of the host communities were collected through a questionnaire. Data were collected from individuals residing in the area through a questionnaire survey through the pen and paper method. The researchers employed the systematic random sampling technique to choose the participants from the rural population; each person in the population has an equal chance of being selected for data collection. Statistical research recommends a minimum sample size ten times larger than the number of variables under study, with a selected error rate of 5%. In the current study, the researchers have created a questionnaire consisting of 87 items. To ensure a sufficient sample size, it is recommended to have a minimum sample size of 870 individuals from the rural destinations of southern India. In September 2023, a preliminary survey (pilot study) of the questionnaire were conducted among 50 randomly selected respondents from different strata (rural host communities) chosen from the rural host communities of Mahabalipuram village, a representative rural tourism destination in Tamil Nadu, one of India's southern states. After obtaining consent and seeking guidance from research professionals, we conducted reliability and validity tests. Following the pilot study,

a formal questionnaire survey has been conducted in additional rural areas, with a total of 900 survey questionnaires sent. A total of 885 questionnaires were returned after completion. Due to the absence of certain data, a total of 874 surveys were deemed appropriate for the study. The survey was performed from August 2023 to February 2024.

3. QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

Based on the research requirements, the authors divided the questionnaire into two parts. The first section (4 items) comprises the demographic information, encompassing age, gender, education, occupation, and yearly income of the host communities. The second section gathered information on livelihood satisfaction (4 items). The third section consists of the components of the quality of life of rural host communities, including "tourism infrastructure facilities" (4 items), "entrepreneurial self-efficacy" (4 items), "community well-being" (4 items), "prosperity of individuals" (4 items), and "sustainable agricultural practices" (4 items). Finally, the fourth section, titled "Heritage Education" (5 items), serves as the moderation variable, incorporating important elements gathered from expert interviews and literature assessments.

4. STUDY AREA

Rural tourism is prevalent worldwide and represents a fast-expanding market niche within the tourism industry. This study is conducted in the existing rural tourism destinations, which were chosen based on the official declaration of the Ministry of Tourism, India. Six destinations were chosen from four different southern states of India, namely Mahabalipuram and Karaikudi from Tamil Nadu, Pochampally from Telangana, Puttur from Andhra Pradesh, and Kumarakom and Vaikom from Kerala. These areas are multifaceted tourism destinations with specific history, culture, heritage, traditional values, and unique entrepreneurial activities. The statistical population consists of rural destinations' host communities.

The six rural sites provide several tourist attractions that serve as gathering places for community members. The tourist establishments carefully selected the sample population. The research sample was divided into multiple hamlets, with 168 respondents from the Mahabalipuram hamlet. These respondents consisted of small and medium-sized enterprise entrepreneurs, including local food shop owners, female entrepreneurs selling flowers, key chain shop owners, sellers of dolls made from shells, sculpture sellers, and entrepreneurs teaching the art of sculpting and serving as tourist guides. The 140 participants from Karaikudi hamlet included individuals who owned heritage palaces, worked as employees in these palaces, managed local food shops, specialized in heritage cuisine, owned restaurants, owned heritage resorts, were employed in these resorts, owned tile shops, and owned petty shops near temples. The 120 respondents from Puttur hamlet consisted of local citizens living in and near the treatment centres, medical practitioners working at the hospitals, and other facility staff. The survey included 174 participants from Kumarakom hamlet, including tourist officials, Kerala Tourism Corporation workers, yacht owners, local inhabitants, small retail businesses, local food shop owners, seafood shop proprietors, and seafood restaurant entrepreneurs. A total of 181 individuals from the Pochampally hamlet participated in the survey. These individuals included local shop owners, handloom weavers, textile shop owners, restaurant owners, and employees. Additionally, 117 respondents from the Vaikom hamlet participated in the survey. These respondents consisted of handloom weavers, textile shop owners, seafood restaurant owners and employees, residents, and petty shop owners.

The Conceptual Framework depicted in Figure 2 illustrates the correlation between the quality of life and livelihood satisfaction of host communities, along with the influence of heritage education as a moderating factor. Figure 3 shows the map of southern India and six rural destinations chosen for data collection.

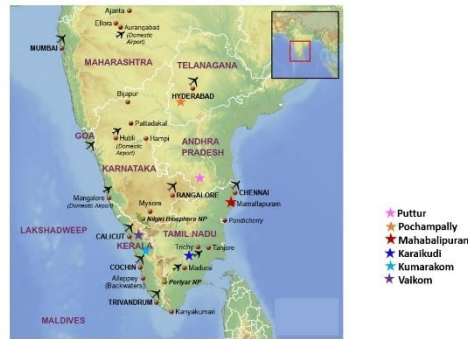


FIGURE 3. Map of south India and location of six rural destinations
 (Source: geographical map from ministry of tourism, India, locations of each rural destination are located by authors)

VI. DATA ANALYSIS

1. RESULTS OF PILOT STUDY

1.1 Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis

The pilot study includes an evaluation of the questionnaire's accuracy through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and then confirmation through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). In terms of CB-SEM attributes, the confirmatory study is both trustworthy and valid for hypothesis testing. The research conducted independent exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on three constructs: 'quality of life', 'heritage education', and 'livelihood satisfaction'. Table 2 presents the results of the EFA. The KMO for each latent and observable variable were between 0.619 and 0.780, which is above the threshold value of 0.50. At the 5% level, the confidence interval for all of the shown effects is significant.

Table 2. Results of exploratory factor analysis (Source: Authors Compilation)

Measurement Items	KMO Test Values
Quality of Life	0.615
Heritage Education	0.780
Livelihood satisfaction	0.686

Note: Significant value > 0.50, all shown effects are significant at a 5% level

1.2 Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

CFA is conducted to evaluate the reliability and validity of the measuring items. Cronbach's alpha (α) value of 0.857, which surpasses the threshold of 0.8, is generally regarded as satisfactory for evaluating reliability. The measurement items used in the study showed a significant degree of internal coherence. All items had factor loadings ranging from 0.610 to 0.969, which were determined to have a substantial statistical impact ($p < .001$). The confidence interval shows all the effects are significant at the 5% level. Table 3 presents an overview of the values for each variable in the confirmatory factor analysis.

Table 3. Confirmatory factor analysis results (source: authors compilation)

S. No.	Descriptions	Factor Loadings
1.	Accessibility & Accommodation	0.746
2.	Information and Communication Centres	0.780
3.	Health & Safety	0.706
4.	Recreational Amenities	0.610

5.	Persistence and resilience	0.793
6.	Entrepreneurial knowledge and skills	0.655
7.	Innovation & Creation of new ventures	0.693
8.	Risk-taking efforts	0.766
9.	Community life	0.735
10.	Community Equity	0.828
11.	Community Environment	0.627
12.	Community empowerment	0.769
13.	Economic strength	0.878
14.	Cultural and artistic expression	0.878
15.	Tourism prosperity	0.945
16.	Access to finance	0.969
17.	Cultural heritage preservation	0.631
18.	Community Supported Agriculture	0.770
19.	Promotion of culinary tourism	0.601
20.	Ecotourism potential	0.767
21.	Standard of living	0.713
22.	Work-life	0.833
23.	Social-life	0.916
24.	Technology support	0.715
25.	Preservation and conservation	0.816
26.	Cultural exchange	0.811
27.	Experiential learning	0.745
28.	Enduring opportunities	0.846
29.	Capacity building	0.904

NOTE: Significant value > 0.60, all shown effects are significant at a 5% level.

2. SUMMARY OF THE SAMPLING PROFILE

Table 4 exhibits the descriptive statistics and shows the frequency distribution of the demographic data of rural host communities. Most rural host communities that responded were between the ages of 41 and 50. Around 73.6 percent of the destinations are male, and the rest are female. Around 60 percent of rural inhabitants have lived in their specific areas for more than 30 years, passing down their residency through ancestral lines.

Table 4. Demographic details of the rural host communities (source: authors compilation)

Item	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-20	13	01.5%
	21-30	63	07.2%
	31-40	151	17.3%
	41-50	377	43.1%
	50 & above	270	30.9%
Gender	Female	231	26.4%
	Male	643	73.6%
Education	Primary Education	140	16.0%
	Diploma	501	57.3%
	High School	68	07.8%
	University education & above	165	18.9%
Occupation	Employed	157	18.0%
	Unemployed	60	06.9%
	Entrepreneur	523	59.8%
	Farmer	134	15.3%

3. STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELLING RESULTS - GOODNESS OF FIT STATISTICS

The current study's data analysis predominantly employed the structural equation model using SPSS AMOS 26. Fit indices that directly measure model fit are absolute fit indices. These indices are typically seen as measures of the proportion of the covariances in the sample data matrix that are accounted for by the model. These indices typically evaluate the disparity between observed and estimated covariance matrices as a means of evaluating model fit. The GFI, AGFI, RMR, SRMR, and RMSEA are widely used measures of absolute fit indices. Table 5 presents a brief review of the model's fit. The SEM's absolute fit index and simple fit index for 'livelihood satisfaction' and 'quality of life' in rural host communities are both in optimal condition. The model demonstrated a strong fit, an RMSEA of 0.056, which lies in the significant range between 0 and 1, a CFI of 0.998, and a GFI of 0.998, which exceeded the acceptable threshold value of 0.80. Finally, for Chi-square/Degree of Freedom, the values were less than 5, with χ^2/df of 3.476. Hence, the model depicted in Figure 4 with regression weights are determined to be the definitive research model.

Table 5. Model fit summary (source: authors compilation)

Key Statistics	Value
RMSEA	0.056
CFI	0.998
GFI	0.905
AGFI	0.935
CMIN/DF	1.949
NFI	0.998
RFI	0.968
IFI	0.999
TLI	0.984

Note: RMSEA=Root Mean Square Error Approximation, NFI=Normed Fit Index, CFI=Comparative Fit Index, RFI=Relative Fit Index, GFI=Goodness of Fit Index, IFI=Incremental Fit Index AGFI= Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index, TLI= Tucker-Lewis's index, CMIN/DF= Chi-square/Degree of Freedom.

3. HYPOTHESIS VERIFICATION

3.1 Direct Effect of Quality of Life on Livelihood Satisfaction Rural Host Communities

The findings confirmed that tourism infrastructure facilities have a significant impact on rural host communities' livelihood satisfaction (H1). A well-established infrastructure entices a greater number of visitors by improving accessibility, ensuring safety, and providing convenience. Tourism may provide job possibilities, both directly (such as in hotels and restaurants) and indirectly (such as via supply chains). Additionally, it could lead to an increase in revenue from local goods and services like artisanal crafts, culinary offerings, and guided excursions. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy has a significant impact on rural host communities' livelihood satisfaction (H2). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy encompasses the ability to see opportunities, develop plans and carry them out, effectively manage resources, establish and maintain networks, and demonstrate persistence in the context of tourist firms. Entrepreneurs who possess a strong sense of self-efficacy can provide employment opportunities for individuals within their community. This, in turn, results in wider economic advantages and an enhanced quality of life for the whole community. Community well-being greatly impacts the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities (H3). The interconnection between community well-being and livelihood satisfaction is strong, as each influence and reinforces the other. Community well-being includes social cohesiveness, access to services, environmental quality, cultural vitality, and economic stability. Individual prosperity has a significant impact on rural host communities' livelihood satisfaction (H4). A community characterized by robust economic prosperity provides superior job prospects, financial stability, and resources, thereby immediately enhancing overall happiness with one's livelihood. Implementing economic strategies that promote the growth of local enterprises, agricultural activities, or tourism may significantly improve the overall welfare of the

community and the financial prospects of individuals. Sustainable agricultural practices greatly impact the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities (H5). The promotion of traditional agricultural methods like crop rotation and diversification, agroforestry, organic farming, conservation tillage, integrated pest management (IPM), water conservation, soil fertility management, and precision agriculture is crucial.

Table 6 reveals a significant association between dependent, and independent variables and predicted regression weight assumptions.

Table 6. Results of hypothesis testing (source: authors compilation)

No	Hypothesis	Estimates	P	Test Results
H1	Tourism infrastructure facilities ⇒ Livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities	.526	***	Acpt.
H2	Entrepreneurial self-efficacy ⇒ Livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities	.214	***	Acpt.
H3	Community well-being ⇒ Livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities	.137	***	Acpt.
H4	Prosperity of Individuals ⇒ Livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities	.160	***	Acpt.
H5	Sustainable agricultural practices ⇒ Livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities	.047	.011	Acpt.

NOTE: ***significant at $p < 0.05$, all shown effects are significant at 5% level. ⇒=Direct Effect, ⇔= Moderation Effect, Acpt.= Accepted

3.2 Moderation Effect of Heritage Education

Researchers also find that heritage education significantly modifies the relationships between tourism infrastructure facilities and the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities (H1a), entrepreneurial self-efficacy and the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities (H2a), community well-being and the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities (H3a), individual prosperity and the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities (H4a), and finally, sustainable agricultural practices and the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities. Heritage education plays a vital role in the lives of rural residents. It helps preserve their cultural identity, instills a sense of community pride, and contributes to economic development. Additionally, it promotes environmental conservation, offers educational opportunities, enhances well-being, and supports cultural tourism. Through investment in heritage education, rural communities have the opportunity to safeguard their history while also creating a more promising future for future generations. The confidence interval shows all the effects are significant at the 5% level. Therefore, Figure 4 presents the definitive research model with the estimated values. Table 7 reveals a significant association between dependent and independent variables and predicted regression weight assumptions.

Table 7. Results of hypothesis testing (source: authors compilation)

No	Hypothesis	Estimates	P	Test Results
H1a	Tourism infrastructure facilities ⇔ Heritage Education and Livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities	.243	***	Acpt.
H2a	Entrepreneurial self-efficacy ⇔ Heritage Education and Livelihood Satisfaction of rural host communities	.574	***	Acpt.
H3a	Community well-being ⇔ Heritage Education and Livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities	.223	***	Acpt.
H4a	Prosperity of Individuals ⇔ Heritage Education and Livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities	.093	***	Acpt.
H5a	Sustainable agricultural practices ⇒	.147	***	Acpt.

Heritage Education and Livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities

NOTE: ***significant at $p < 0.05$, all shown effects are significant at 5% level. \Rightarrow Direct Effect, \Leftrightarrow Moderation Effect, Acpt.= Accepted.

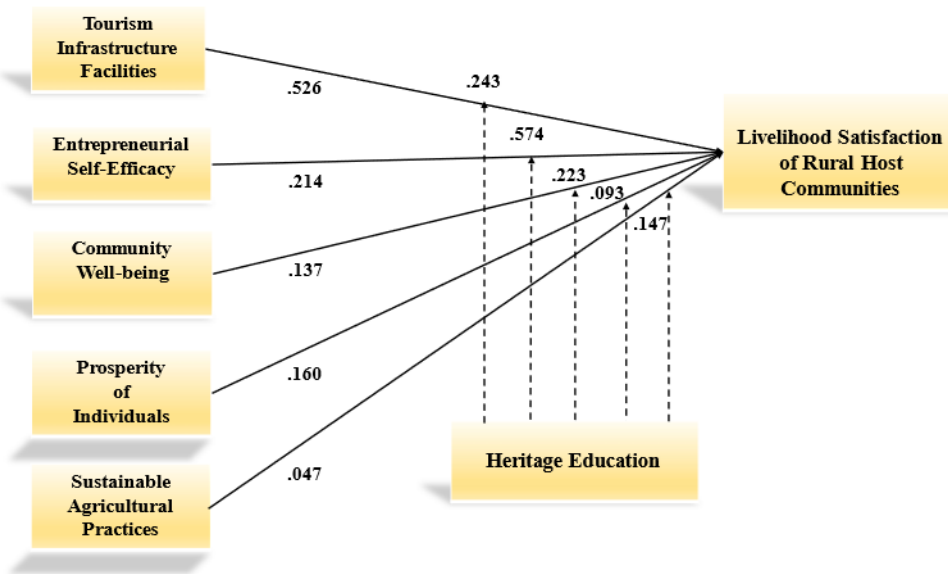


FIGURE 4. Moderation effect of heritage education- model results (source: authors compilation)

4. EXPLORATION OF HERITAGE EDUCATION IN THE SIX RURAL DESTINATIONS

Various utilisations and interests, such as leisure, livelihood, and business activities, influence rural tourism resources, potentially leading to conflicting uses [59]. All six South Indian rural tourism destinations included in the current study from the list of the Ministry of Tourism, India, have their own distinct and impressive destination offerings. Every destination is well-known for its rich cultural heritage, breathtaking natural beauty, thriving rural tourism, and distinct local trades. Mahabalipuram, situated in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, is well-known for its impressive array of historical monuments. The predominant occupations in Mahabalipuram involve the sale of hand-crafted idols, stone carvings, shell dolls, and fishing. Karaikudi is located in the beautiful Indian state of Tamil Nadu, renowned for its rich history, magnificent palaces, and mouthwatering traditional cuisine. Karaikudi's economy thrived on the trade of exquisite wood crafts and the renowned "Athangudi Tiles." Pochampally, located in the state of Telangana, has gained a reputation for its exquisite saree weaving. The entire local community earns a living by selling exquisite handmade Ikkat, silk, and cotton sarees. Puttur, located in the state of Andhra Pradesh, is a highly sought-after destination for medical tourism. The residents of the area earn a living by assisting individuals with fractures and offering splints or bandages as needed. Vaikom, a resident of the Indian state of Kerala, earns a livelihood through the cultivation of coconut trees, rice, tapioca, and fish. Finally, the researchers in Kumarakom, Kerala, are well-known for their yachting, water sports, and commitment to promoting responsible and wellness tourism. They earn a living by farming, researching agricultural products, and fishing. Figure 5 displays the distance between rural destinations and educational opportunities about heritage.

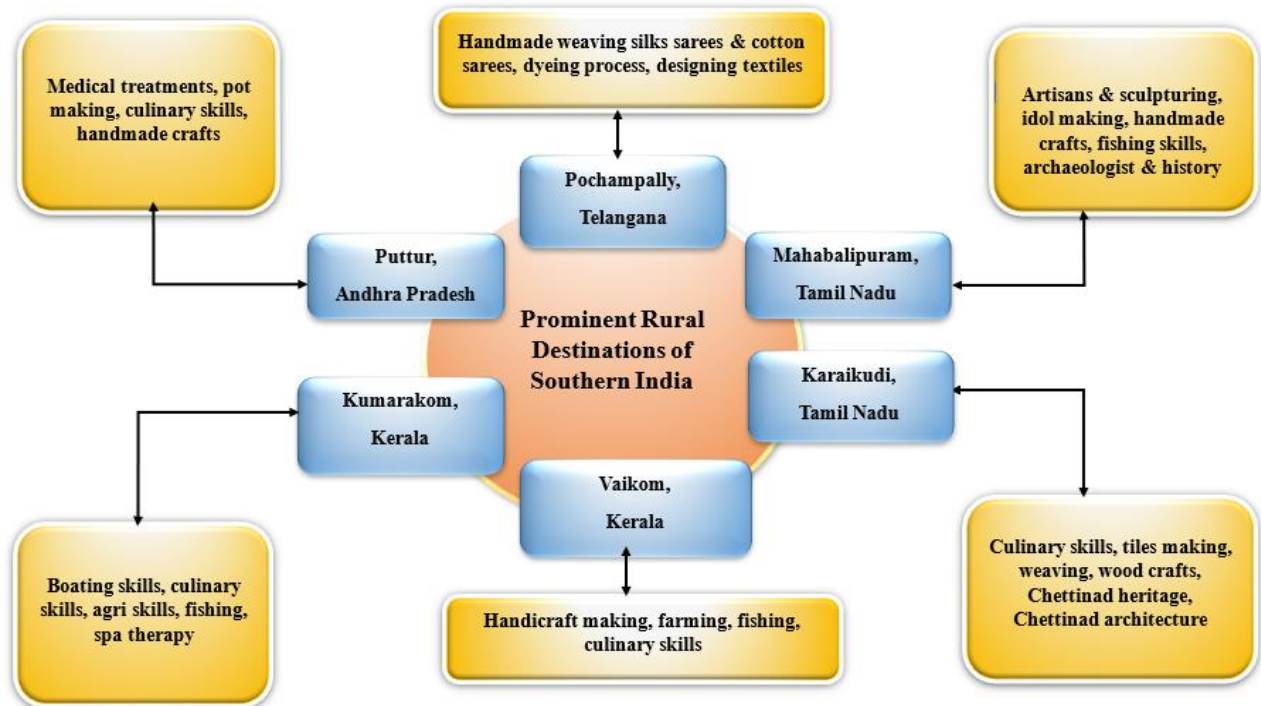


FIGURE 5. Heritage education in each rural destination (source: authors compilation)

5. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HERITAGE EDUCATION IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF RURAL HOST COMMUNITIES

The Ministry of Tourism, India, has identified six rural tourism destinations in south India that are highly renowned for their heritage education, a legacy passed down from their ancestors, and have the potential to continue growing as both rural tourism destinations and host communities. The investigators in the current study directly collected information from the respondents to understand their quality of life and recommend key areas for policymakers to focus on. Through a variety of means, heritage education significantly contributes to improving the quality of life for rural host communities.

1. *Promoting cultural identity:* Heritage education connects rural inhabitants to their culture, encouraging pride and connection. This reinforces their culture and builds community.
2. *Preserving cultural heritage:* Heritage education preserves culture by educating local customs and history. This preservation protects the past and gives rural communities continuity and stability.
3. *Campaigning tourism:* Heritage education encourages people to promote sustainable tourism, support community-based initiatives, and advocate for positive industry change by raising awareness of tourism's social, cultural, economic, and environmental impacts.
4. *Creating economic opportunities:* Heritage monuments and cultural events may attract visitors, creating economic possibilities for rural communities through homestays, handicrafts, local food, and guided tours. Heritage education teaches locals how to sustainably use those opportunities.
5. *Collaborating globally:* Heritage education helps tourism professionals collaborate and share information globally, as well as helping tourism workers, researchers, and policymakers work together to solve problems and seize opportunities from heritage education through academic alliances, research collaborations, and overseas study programs.
6. *Fostering environmental stewardship:* Heritage education promotes environmental stewardship and sustainable practices that preserve natural and cultural resources for future generations.

7. *Empowering communities:* Heritage education empowers communities by including them in preservation initiatives. Rural host communities become stronger and more resilient when they participate in cultural heritage management and conservation decisions.
8. *Enhancing social cohesion and well-being:* Heritage-related festivals, seminars, and storytelling may foster social interaction and belonging in rural communities. Social cohesiveness reduces isolation and strengthens support networks, improving well-being.
9. *Facilitating intergenerational knowledge:* Heritage education helps generations share expertise and skills. Rural elders may pass on significant traditional information to younger generations via heritage education, preserving cultural legacies for future generations.
10. *Providing entrepreneurship:* Heritage education promotes tourism entrepreneurship and innovation and fosters economic development, new enterprises, and destination community employment by teaching people how to establish and run tourist companies.

The role played by heritage education in enhancing the quality of life of rural host communities is shown in Figure 6.



FIGURE 6. Heritage education and enhancing quality of life (source: authors compilation)

VII. DISCUSSIONS & CONCLUSION

1. SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTION

This study has made a significant contribution to academics by developing a conceptual model that examines livelihood satisfaction through quality-of-life dimensions among rural host communities in India. This model integrates theories such as integrative quality-of-life theory, social exchange theory, and sustainable development theory, all of which have a rich heritage. As a result, this study provides a comprehensive framework for researchers to investigate and analyze many aspects (both personal and social) that influence the well-being and happiness of rural residents to improve tourism. An important addition to this study is the examination of the extent to which quality of life determinants, such as tourism infrastructure facilities, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, community well-being, individual prosperity, and sustainable agricultural practices, determine the livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities. This study shows that rural host communities' livelihood shapes heritage education and quality of life aspects, which affect livelihood satisfaction. Thus, heritage knowledge and quality of life dimensions influence the overall sense of happiness and livelihood satisfaction of rural host communities. Furthermore, the study also investigated the impact of heritage education on the relationship between the dimensions of quality of life and satisfaction with livelihood. This was achieved by adapting the special features of rural tourism based

on previous research findings. This study provides a detailed framework for researchers and academics to investigate and analyze the various factors, both internal and related to tourism, that influence rural host communities' satisfaction or happiness in terms of their livelihood. The progress in tourism and the existence of a diverse heritage influences these factors. Therefore, in academic theory, this research enhances the existing information by demonstrating the association between heritage education and the experiences of rural host communities. All five aspects of the quality-of-life dimensions (tourism infrastructure facilities, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, community well-being, individual prosperity, and sustainable agricultural practices) intricately connect to rural tourism. This study's contribution establishes a foundation for future research in understanding rural development, tourism management practices, cultural heritage preservation, economic impact assessment, and cross-cultural exchange and learning.

2. IMPLICATIONS

2.1 Practical Implications and Sustainable Development Goals for Improvement of Quality of Life (Rural host communities)

The concept of sustainability is critical for contemporary tourism operations in rural regions [58]. Sustainable development is defined as the ability to meet current needs while also ensuring that future generations can meet their own. It necessitates a well-rounded advancement of economic, social, and environmental components. Creating sustainable livelihoods entails developing rural people's production activities, allowing them to effectively manage and overcome challenges while also enhancing their capabilities and resources for the long term without causing harm to the environment. Additionally, it offers significant recommendations for improving the quality of life in rural host communities via sustainable development approaches through tourism. This study aims to enhance awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the local, national, and international levels by thoroughly understanding and embracing several objectives of the SDGs from a tourism perspective. Figure 7 presents a diagrammatic view of the interconnection between SDGs and the quality of life for rural host communities. Table 8 presents a full description of suggestions for enhancing the quality of life of rural host communities through the SDGs.

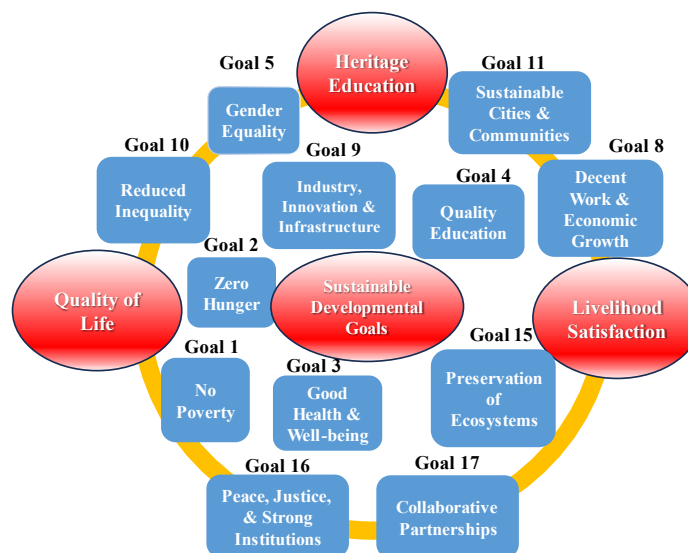


FIGURE 7. Interconnection of SDGs and rural host communities' quality of life (source: authors compilation)

Table 8. Suggestions for enhancing the quality of life of rural host communities through SDGs

Sustainable Developmental Goals	Suggestions for Enhancing the Quality of Life for Rural host communities
SDG 1: No poverty	A variety of tourism methods should be developed to help rural inhabitants find decent jobs. The Indian government might launch an initiative targeting the creation of job possibilities in the tourist industry for qualified poor citizens. To reduce poverty, it is critical to develop initiatives that foster entrepreneurship for young people who have dropped out of school, women from weaker section, transgender people and the poor.
SDG 2: Zero hunger	To provide enough nourishment for everybody, it is vital to undertake tourism development initiatives that supply meals or food vouchers to the local people and tourists, with the aid of government agencies. Increasing the number of local producers offering goods and services to tourism businesses. Efforts to reduce food waste can contribute to food security by enhancing food storage, redistribution and circulation. Increase the number of tourism-led farms/agricultural companies that supply food for the local community.
SDG 3: Good health and well-being	Tourism-related safety measures, such as road signage, traffic management and road network enhancements, can benefit both locals and tourists. It is important to provide training on hygiene and safety protocols, as well as cleanliness standards, to tourism companies, employees and local communities in tourist destinations. Generating awareness on health insurance specifically tailored to cover medical and hospital costs. Standards and protocols should be provided to ensure employees' health and safety, such as access to healthcare programs, immunizations and medications.
SDG 4: Quality education.	Extended educational and training initiatives focused on tourism education and heritage education, as outlined in the tourism action plan. The action plan of the tourist strategy must include activities aimed at satisfying the educational needs of the industry for all individuals, without any prejudices or biases.
SDG 5: Gender Equality	It is imperative to ensure that all women in rural areas are supplied with gender equality awareness and women's assistance programming specifically designed for the tourist sector. The average remuneration of women in the tourist industry must surpass that of males. Providing opportunities for women to hold managerial roles as board members, and middle and upper management positions within the tourism industry or businesses. Rise in the proportion of female entrepreneurs in the tourist industry as proprietors.
SDG 8: Decent work and Economic growth	Increased economic productivity may be achieved by diversification, technology advancements in smartphones, digitalization, networking, digital banking, Electric vehicles and wearable technologies. Promote individuals possessing specialized expertise and knowledge in the areas of traveler innovation, cultural preservation, heritage education and community development. The tourist project/development provides opportunities for MSMEs in the tourism sector, leading to substantial growth in income and employment. Enhance the percentage of "Self-employed workers" and "Family workers" in the overall employment within the tourism sector.
SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	The number of tourism companies that have been certified as sustainable firms, indicating their dedication to resource efficiency, fostering local citizen engagement and offering environmentally friendly amenities, must be mentioned. Many measures have to be taken to encourage innovations in sustainable tourism, with the needs of travellers, businesses, the environment and the people who reside. Increased sales volume for a revolutionary tourism product based on a new idea.

SDG 10: Reduced Inequality	Promote local community engagement in tourist development and ensure they receive a fair portion of tourism revenue. Encourage community-based tourism groups and rural tourism product sales. Tourism businesses that prohibit discrimination, protect migrant workers, provide financial services and train personnel to improve customer experience.
SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	Tourism development initiatives and advertising activities should increase public transportation services to promote environmentally friendly mobility. Promoting community involvement and financial contributions in local cultural heritage initiatives, such as opposing plastics, promoting sustainable use of natural resources, implementing effective waste management practices and adopting renewable energy solutions through environmentally friendly goods.
SDG 15: Preservation of Ecosystems	Measures to mitigate the environmental effect of tourism in protected regions. It is important to execute enough actions by tourism stakeholders to encourage reforestation and the conservation of natural forests. Tourism policies should prioritize the preservation of alpine environmental systems, especially the protection of ecological balance. Tourism personnel are required to engage in workshops organized by a tourism-related organization that focuses on the significance of biodiversity and the protection of ecosystems. The tourism industry has the potential to actively raise awareness about the issues of poaching and trafficking of protected species. This can be achieved by participating in campaigns that discourage tourists from engaging in any illegal purchase of poached wildlife or its by-products. Additionally, tourism businesses can inform their clients and partners about their initiatives in combating these practices. The proportion of tourist earnings or tax allocated to finance biodiversity protection.
SDG 17: Collaborative Partnerships	Rise in the quantity of Internet-related infrastructure developments, as well as activities in the travel destination that support technological advancements and innovations related to tourism. Master plans or roadmaps for information, communication and technology must be improved for the remote places. The tourism initiative should lead to the creation of many e-commerce strategies. Educational courses and activities emphasize how tourism contributes to the SDGs across the tourism curriculum and raise awareness of the SDGs at various educational levels.

2.2 Implications of heritage education on rural tourism and community development

Rural places exemplify exceptional instances of cultural legacy, whether it be physical or intangible, as well as natural heritage [61]. The strategies for effective heritage education include community engagement, collaborative partnerships, interactive and experiential learning, inclusive programs, and monitoring and evaluation. The study results [62] reveal that in cultural heritage villages, local ideals and vows to maintain the historic space play a crucial role in balancing the needs of tourism with the idealized image of the village for the country. Local communities' perception and understanding of their surroundings, along with the social, economic, and political factors that shape a nation's development, influence the creation of cultural heritage villages. The intricate challenges faced by these communities have a significant role in shaping the physical and social aspects of cultural heritage villages [63]. The diverse range of cultural heritage in rural China, including ethnic handicrafts, architecture, arts, festivals, and scenery, has the potential to stimulate economic rejuvenation, foster tourist growth, and promote community cooperation [64]. The rural culture of Apulia is a prominent asset, including its comprehensive cultural, ecological, landscape, folklore, and identity history. This may facilitate the territorial region's ongoing growth, especially its interior portions, allowing for an extension of the travel seasons [65]. Heritage education may improve the tourist experience by raising guests' awareness and respect for regional customs, history, and culture. Communities may encourage genuine tourism that respects and maintains cultural and historical assets by teaching residents and tourists alike about the actual value of heritage. Authentic tourism attracts travelers seeking cultural

immersion, thereby increasing demand for heritage-focused tours, events, and activities. Heritage education promotes community stewardship by encouraging residents to actively manage and safeguard their cultural sites, helping to prevent tourism-related damage to these priceless treasures. Heritage education provides community members with knowledge and skills related to cultural expression, tourist services, and heritage management. To prevent the loss of these cultural assets over time, heritage education helps elder generations pass on traditional knowledge and practices to younger ones. Including young people in heritage, education may motivate future leaders and business owners in the historic tourism industry.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Over the last five decades, the field of heritage has made significant advances in studying authenticity in rural destinations. When it comes to traditional villages with a distinct cultural property status, authenticity encompasses not only cultural features but also rural host communities' standard of living and tourism-related happiness [59]. The study [66] suggested that said that establishing rural tourism as a new source of income required ongoing interaction, negotiation, and adaptation. Therefore, the continuous emphasis on community well-being inherently connects the genuineness of traditional villages. The study aimed to understand rural residents' perspectives on their quality of life and overall pleasure by examining the knowledge and teachings inherited from their ancestors, known as heritage education. The current research has revealed that quality of life determinants such as tourism infrastructure facilities, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, community well-being, individual prosperity, and sustainable agricultural practices have a positive impact on rural host communities' happiness levels. This study is the first to examine the moderating impact of heritage education on rural host communities' livelihood satisfaction. Since India relies heavily on tourism for foreign exchange generation, financial aid and support programs play a vital role in addressing the economic challenges faced by rural host communities, promoting inclusive growth, and building resilient rural communities. By investing in human capital, infrastructure, and economic opportunities, financial aid helps unlock the full potential of rural areas and improve the quality of life for rural host communities. Rural communities may maintain their distinct cultural identities while fostering economic and social well-being by using contemporary technologies, involving local people, and incorporating heritage education into formal and informal learning. Improved sustainability living can be achieved by putting into practice the concept of sustainable quality of life components, which include social relations and equality, participation and identification, nature and landscape, education and knowledge, income and employment, mobility, health and safety, and so on. These components are designed to improve the level of satisfaction that rural host communities have with their livelihoods [67].

However, our study also found that many respondents in the rural southern Indian districts we studied considered a major barrier to establishing a relationship between livelihood satisfaction and quality of life. This validates the literature's findings, which indicate that while India has achieved its QoL goals, sustained integration still requires development. Additionally, the results show that the individuals spoke about their quality of life. According to past studies done in rural regions, heritage education is another essential notion that is crucial to maintaining and safeguarding India's traditions and customs.

1. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING RURAL TOURISM THROUGH HERITAGE EDUCATION

The creation of successful heritage education programs in rural regions requires a careful approach that considers the distinctive social, cultural, and economic circumstances of these communities. Utilise technology to improve heritage education, include heritage education in rural development plans, promote inclusive and diverse heritage education, establish heritage education centres, incorporate heritage education into school curricula, and support community-based heritage programs. These policy ideas aim to improve culture preservation, community growth, and sustainable tourism by creating an environment that is conducive to heritage education in rural areas.

2. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study provides an important foundation for further research on the role and importance of rural tourism, as well as its benefits to rural host communities utilizing sustainable tourism developments. Despite

the considerable practical and theoretical contributions, the present study encountered various obstacles, such as geographical dispersion and limited accessibility. The research did not address the social repercussions for the rural host communities. In India, each state possesses its own designated rural destination. Expanding the scope of data collection to encompass diverse rural destinations across various states (North, East, and West) in India would be significant for future research. In the future, empirical research on the idea of a sustainable quality of life in rural regions is also possible. In the future, it may be possible to examine how technology and digital inclusion affect rural populations' quality of life and happiness with their means of subsistence. Research on how tourist development has influenced community resilience is also possible. Furthermore, the researcher must determine the processes by which exploring rural tourism can positively impact the development of rural host communities in India and other countries.

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Author contribution

All authors contributed equally to the study's development and planning.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

Data are available from the authors upon request.

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