

EXPLORING LIVELIHOOD MOTIVATIONS AMONG B40 COMMUNITIES PARTICIPATING IN THE IKAN BEKOK ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME IN BESUT, TERENGGANU: A SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD FRAMEWORK PERSPECTIVE

Nurhidayah Rosely¹
Siti Zulaikha Mustapha²
Nor Zuriati Amani Ab Rani*³
Khalid Abdul Wahid⁴
Norafefah Mohamad Sobri⁵
Noor Masliana Razlan⁶

¹ Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kelantan, (UiTM), Malaysia, (Email: nurhidayahrosely@uitm.edu.my)

² Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kelantan, (UiTM), Malaysia, (E-mail: szulaikha@uitm.edu.my)

³ Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kelantan, (UiTM), Malaysia, (E-mail: norzuriati@uitm.edu.my)

⁴ Faculty of Information Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kelantan, (UiTM), Malaysia, (E-mail: awkhalid@uitm.edu.my)

⁵ Faculty of Information Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kelantan, (UiTM), Malaysia, (E-mail: masliana0315@uitm.edu.my)

⁶ Faculty of Information Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kelantan, (UiTM), Malaysia, (E-mail: noraf378@uitm.edu.my)

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Abstract: *Community-based entrepreneurship programmes have increasingly been promoted as mechanisms for poverty alleviation and economic empowerment among low-income communities in Malaysia. However, limited attention has been given to understanding how prospective participants perceive such programmes before engaging in entrepreneurial activities. This study explores the motivations, aspirations, and livelihood assets of B40 individuals participating in the Ikan Bekok enterprise programme in Besut, Terengganu. Exploratory descriptive qualitative design was employed, involving semi-structured interviews with sixteen programme participants recruited through convenience and snowball sampling techniques and analysed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal five emerging themes; livelihood necessity, family and social support, pursuing economic opportunities through self-development, aspirations for future advancement, and anticipating challenges and uncertainties. Interpreted through the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, the findings indicate that participants sought to strengthen multiple livelihood assets, particularly financial, human,*

and social capital, while recognising the importance of physical and natural resources in sustaining traditional food enterprises. Participation in the programme was primarily driven by economic vulnerability and the need for income diversification rather than immediate entrepreneurial ambitions. The study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that traditional food enterprise programmes function not only as entrepreneurship initiatives but also as livelihood strategies that support household resilience and community empowerment among low-income populations.

Keywords: *Livelihood motivation; sustainable livelihood framework, traditional food entrepreneurship, B40 communities, community empowerment*

Introduction

Poverty alleviation and economic empowerment remain important priorities in Malaysia, particularly among households classified within the Bottom 40 per cent (B40) income group. Despite various socio-economic development initiatives, B40 households continue to experience financial vulnerability due to income instability, rising living costs, and limited economic opportunities. These circumstances have increased the need for livelihood diversification and alternative income-generating activities to enhance household resilience and improve well-being (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023).

Entrepreneurship and community-based enterprise programmes have been widely promoted as mechanisms for income generation and poverty reduction among low-income populations (United Nations Development Programme, 2022). Among these initiatives, traditional food enterprises have gained increasing attention because they offer opportunities for small-scale economic participation while simultaneously preserving local cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge (Bene, 2020). Traditional food production is particularly suitable for low-income households because it generally requires relatively low start-up capital, can be undertaken from home, and allows flexibility in balancing household responsibilities and income-generating activities.

Prior studies have largely focused on established entrepreneurs, business performance, and commercialisation outcomes of traditional food enterprises (Li et al., 2022; Zheng et al., 2023). However, less attention has been devoted to individuals at the pre-enterprise stage who participate in entrepreneurship-related programmes as a potential strategy for improving household livelihoods. Furthermore, existing studies frequently assume that participation in entrepreneurship programmes is primarily motivated by entrepreneurial aspirations and business intentions.

In fact, for economically vulnerable communities, participation in entrepreneurship programmes may be driven by broader livelihood concerns, including financial insecurity, family responsibilities, income diversification, and aspirations for improved household well-being. The Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) argues that individuals and households mobilise various livelihood assets, including financial, human, social, physical, and natural capital, to cope with vulnerability and pursue sustainable livelihood outcomes (Department for International Development [DFID], 1999).

Although entrepreneurship programmes have increasingly been implemented to empower low-income communities and reduce poverty, limited research has examined how potential

participants perceive such programmes before engaging in entrepreneurial activities. Existing studies predominantly focus on business performance, entrepreneurial success, and commercialisation outcomes among established entrepreneurs, with comparatively little attention given to individuals at the pre-enterprise stage (Li et al., 2022; Morris et al., 2020). Moreover, many entrepreneurship interventions are designed based on the assumption that participants possess entrepreneurial aspirations and growth-oriented intentions. Such assumptions may overlook the realities of economically vulnerable communities, where participation in enterprise programmes is frequently motivated by the need to secure additional income, improve household livelihoods, and cope with economic uncertainties (Bene, 2020).

Within the context of traditional food enterprises, limited empirical evidence exists regarding how B40 communities perceive participation in these programmes and how various livelihood assets influence their motivations and aspirations. Understanding these issues is important because programme effectiveness may depend not only on technical training but also on participants' access to financial, human, social, physical, and natural capital assets that facilitate sustainable livelihood strategies.

Consequently, there remains a need for exploratory research that provides preliminary insights into the motivations, aspirations, and livelihood assets of B40 communities participating in community-based traditional food enterprise programmes. Addressing this gap may contribute to the design of more inclusive and sustainable interventions that align with the needs and circumstances of vulnerable populations.

Within this context, traditional food enterprise programmes may be viewed not merely as entrepreneurship initiatives but also as livelihood strategies that enable low-income households to strengthen their livelihood assets and improve economic resilience. Therefore, understanding participants' motivations, expectations, and aspirations is important for designing programmes that are responsive to the realities and needs of vulnerable communities.

Accordingly, this study explores the motivations and livelihood aspirations of B40 individuals participating in the *Ikan Bekok* entrepreneurship programme in Besut, Terengganu. Guided by the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, the study seeks to understand how participants perceive programme participation as a pathway towards livelihood enhancement and improved household well-being.

Literature Review

The intersection of poverty eradication, traditional heritage preservation, and community resilience has emerged as an important aspect in the development of economics and social in rural communities. Within emerging economies like Malaysia, the country has focused on micro-entrepreneurship programs as a structural mechanism intended to assist vulnerable populations out of economic challenges. This qualitative study explores the socioeconomic realities of Bottom 40 per cent (B40) households in Malaysia, focusing specifically on the rural interior of Kelantan.

Livelihood Challenges and Structural Vulnerability Among B40 Communities

Livelihood security remains a severe, daily concern among low-income households classified within the B40 income bracket in Malaysia. These households are socioeconomically characterized by asset limitations, deep exposure to macroeconomic fluctuations, and a heavily compromised capacity to absorb unexpected financial shocks (Rahim et al., 2024). This

structural vulnerability has been further highlighted by recent updates to the national Poverty Line Income (PLI), which effectively reclassified a broader segment of rural and semi-rural peripheral populations into absolute and hardcore poverty thresholds (Nur Shahidah et al., 2026). Simultaneously, a rising cost of living, unpredictable daily wage conditions, and escalating basic household expenditures have placed intense economic pressure on low-income families, widening the developmental disparity between booming urban industrial hubs and stagnant rural corridors (Mohamad, 2024).

Beyond broad macroeconomic pressures, localized geographical and environmental contexts drastically compound these systemic vulnerabilities. In the coastal and riverine communities of Kelantan, everyday economic challenges are heavily exacerbated by predictable seasonal climate shocks, specifically the North-East Monsoon (*Musim Tengkujuh*). This annual environmental disruption periodically stops economic productivity, physically isolates rural neighborhoods, floods localized marketplaces, and rapidly reduces fragile household savings (Mohamad & Salleh, 2022). The merging of these seasonal vulnerabilities with systemic income inflation forces vulnerable households to look far beyond traditional wage labor to secure daily survival.

Livelihood Diversification via Traditional Food Micro-Enterprises

To mitigate chronic financial instability and seasonal employment pauses, low-income individuals rarely rely on a single, isolated economic resource. Financial vulnerability actively forces individuals to pursue multiple livelihood activities to manage economic risk, distributing their family labor across varied informal channels (Khan & Khan, 2022). Livelihood and income diversification thus serves as a critical, defensive mechanism to absorb financial shocks and build household resilience against persistent inflation (Osei & Mensah, 2025). In rural and semi-rural ecosystems, this diversification frequently demonstrates as a transition into small-scale economic activities, home-based cottage industries, and state-backed community development programs (Abdul Latip et al., 2020; Setiawan et al., 2023).

Among these available options, small-scale traditional food enterprises are uniquely viable for rural communities. Traditional food products are deeply surrounded in local cultural heritage and community identity, offering market demand built on indigenous knowledge and shared culinary traditions (Anuar et al., 2024; Gomez & Silva, 2020). Furthermore, these micro-enterprises are highly accessible to vulnerable populations because they require low startup capital, can be flexibly operated directly from a residential home, and seamlessly accommodate individuals, particularly women, who must balance earning an income with heavy domestic or caretaking responsibilities (Renwarin et al., 2025). As a result, government and regional development bodies heavily promote traditional agro-based food production as a structural tool for community economic participation and empowerment (Kittipanya-ngam & Pholphirul, 2025).

Sustainable Livelihood Framework

The Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) provides a useful lens for understanding how individuals and households utilise available resources to improve their livelihoods and cope with economic vulnerability. Developed by the Department for International Development (DFID, 2019), the framework emphasises the role of livelihood assets, capabilities, and strategies in shaping livelihood outcomes.

According to the framework, individuals draw upon five forms of livelihood capital: financial capital, human capital, social capital, physical capital, and natural capital. Figure 1 shows the livelihood assets from the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF)

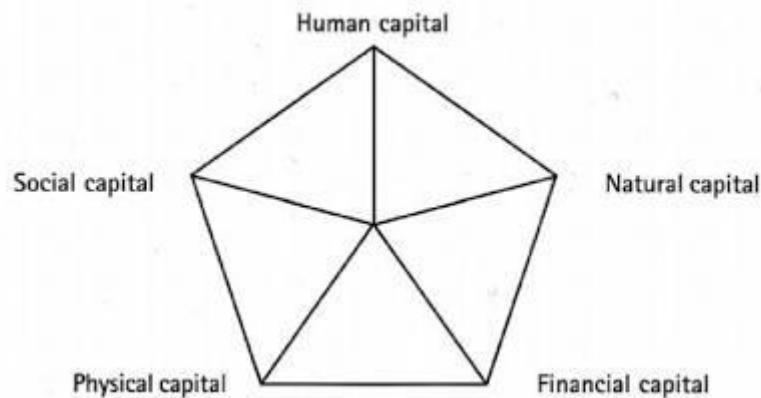


Figure 1: The Livelihood Assets Pentagon

Sources: Department for International Development (DFID, 2019)

Financial capital refers to monetary resources such as income, savings, and access to financial assistance. Human capital encompasses knowledge, skills, education, and competencies that enable individuals to pursue livelihood opportunities. Social capital relates to social networks, relationships, and support systems that facilitate access to resources and opportunities. Physical capital includes infrastructure, equipment, and material resources that support economic activities, while natural capital refers to environmental and natural resources that contribute to livelihood strategies.

The framework suggests that individuals experiencing livelihood challenges seek opportunities to strengthen these livelihood assets in order to improve their well-being and reduce vulnerability. Participation in community development programmes may therefore be understood as a livelihood strategy through which individuals attempt to acquire new skills, access social support, develop economic opportunities, and enhance household income.

Within the context of the present study, the Sustainable Livelihood Framework offers a valuable perspective for understanding why B40 community choose to participate in a traditional food entrepreneurship programme. Rather than viewing participation solely through an entrepreneurial lens, the framework allows exploration of how participants perceive the programme as a mechanism for addressing livelihood challenges and achieving desired household outcomes. Although previous studies have examined entrepreneurship development, traditional food enterprises, and poverty alleviation initiatives, most research has focused on established entrepreneurs and business outcomes. Consequently, limited attention has been given to individuals at the pre-enterprise stage who participate in entrepreneurship-related programmes as potential livelihood strategies.

Empirical Gaps: The Pre-Enterprise Stage and Livelihood Reality of *Ikan Bekok* Production

While existing literature extensively covers entrepreneurship development, traditional food clusters, and macro-level poverty eradication schemes, several significant empirical gaps persist in current scholarship. First, most entrepreneurship research focuses heavily on post-hoc operational metrics, assessing established entrepreneurs, business growth rates, technical e-

commerce adoption, and corporate commercialization pathways (Che Nawi et al., 2021; Ostonokulov et al., 2023). Comparatively little attention is paid to the critical pre-enterprise stage, specifically tracking individuals who enter community enterprise training programs before formal business operations commence (Haron & Ibrahim, 2026). Investigating participants' expectations at this baseline stage is essential, as these initial perceptions fundamentally dictate program retention, long-term operational compliance, and ultimate survival rates (Ibrahim & Ghazali, 2019).

Next, the country policy frameworks and development programs operate under the top-down assumption that microcredit and training participants are inherently driven by growth-oriented, innovative entrepreneurial aspirations (Pa'ad et al., 2024). However, grassroots evidence reveals an unambiguous motivational disconnect. For marginalized B40 communities, participation is rarely born out of a desire for market expansion or corporate scaling; rather, it is a rational, necessity-driven strategy focused on supporting immediate household survival, securing children's education, and insulating the family from extreme financial deprivation (Ibrahim & Ghazali, 2019; Rahim et al., 2024). Furthermore, because these households operate under absolute financial stress, any early profits generated by these initiatives are usually used to cover sudden domestic or medical emergencies. This pattern creates severe internal capital leakage that completely prevents micro-enterprises from scaling as intended by policymakers (Yaacob & Aris, 2020).

While traditional food sectors have been generalized globally, the specific socio-cultural and operational dynamics governing *Ikan Bekok* entrepreneurship within the rural ecosystem of Kelantan remain vastly under-researched. *Ikan Bekok*, a highly perishable, marinated, semi-dried traditional delicacy which embodies specific localized knowledge and heritage processing practices (Anuar et al., 2024). Navigating this sub-sector requires managing distinct regional vulnerabilities, including high climate risks during the monsoon drying season (Mohamad & Salleh, 2022), outdated traditional packaging standards that limit supply-chain logistics (Anuar et al., 2023), and severe cash-flow restrictions unique to the coastal B40 demographic (Yaacob & Aris, 2020). Addressing these converging theoretical and empirical omissions, this qualitative study explores the baseline livelihood motivations and structural aspirations of B40 individuals participating in an *Ikan Bekok* enterprise development programme in Kelantan.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative exploratory research design to gain an initial understanding of the motivations and aspirations of B40 communities participating in *Ikan Bekok* entrepreneurship programme in Besut, Terengganu. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to explore participants' perceptions and expectations regarding participation in an income-generating programme within their socio-economic context.

Participants were recruited using a combination of convenience and snowball sampling techniques. Individuals who attended the programme and were willing to participate in the study were invited to take part in the interviews. Several participants had also joined the programme through recommendations from family members, friends, and community networks. Consequently, participant recruitment occurred naturally through existing social connections and programme accessibility rather than through predetermined selection criteria.

A total of sixteen participants participated in the study. All participants belonged to the B40 income category and had voluntarily enrolled in the *Ikan Bekok* entrepreneurship programme with an interest in exploring potential income-generating opportunities.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted during the programme. The interview protocol focused on participants' reasons for joining the programme, expectations regarding business participation, perceptions of entrepreneurship, income aspirations, confidence in undertaking entrepreneurial activities, and perceived support requirements. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The data were analysed into thematic analysis as it offers a way of recognising and tapping the underlying themes in a given dataset, flexible enough to be modified for the needs of many studies, besides providing rich and elaborate data (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). Unlike content analysis, which is a process that describes qualitative data to represent clusters of responses by establishing categories and identifying the frequency by which they occur (Crowe et al., 2015), thematic analysis refers to the process of interpreting data to find patterns of meaning across the data; this suitable for in this study.

The process involved familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. This approach enabled the identification of recurring patterns and themes related to entrepreneurial intentions and motivational drivers among participants. The researchers recorded all interview sessions and wrote them to generate interpretations during the data collection process.

The researchers extracted the 'significant statement' from the transcription, potentially relevant and essential to answering the research questions. Then, the researchers articulated meanings for each significant statement extracted, and this process included questioning the data patterns and assigning the coded information to the RQs (Creswell, 2013). Next, the researchers transformed the identified initial themes into concise phrases to capture the essential quality found in the text (Osborn & Smith, 2008). Then, the researchers looked for connections among the subthemes to cluster them in a more meaningful way. In this process, similar themes were cross-checked with each informant transcript to ensure that the emerging themes reflected the informant's actual words and meaning. During this process, the researchers clustered or merged some subthemes into a master list of concepts derived from both data sets that reflected the recurring patterns (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This regular pattern turned into the main themes that illustrated abstraction derived from the data, representing the general inductive approach.

In an attempt to empower a holistic perspective, researcher triangulation was attended to validate the data analysis and findings. The interchange and discussion of interpretations help the researchers to define and redefine the direction of analysis. The researchers examined data categorisation and comparisons between the informant's reports to identify the primary themes.

Findings and Discussion

Five themes emerged in relation to the Sustainable Livelihood Framework in order to understand how programme participation may contribute to the enhancement of livelihood assets and outcomes. The five themes related to motivation to participate in the *Ikan Bekok* Entrepreneurship programme among B40 Communities are livelihood necessity, family and

social support, pursuing economic opportunities through self-development, aspirations for future advancement and anticipating challenges and uncertainties. The emerging themes are presented in Figure 1.

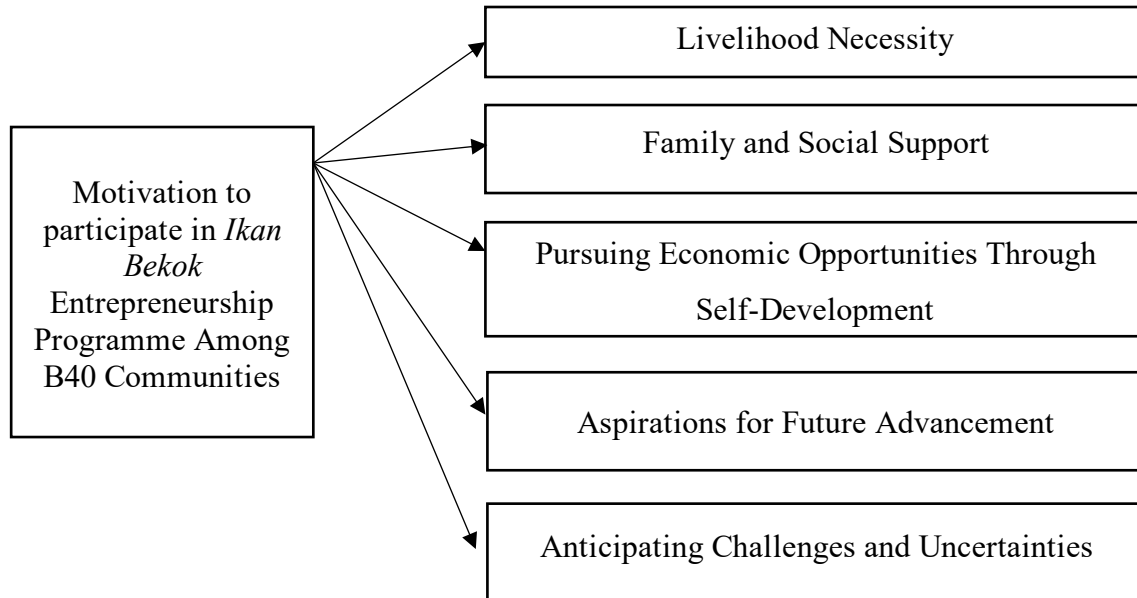


Figure 1: Emerging Themes of Motivation to participate in *Ikan Bekok* Entrepreneurship Programme Among B40 Communities

Theme 1: Livelihood Necessity

The theme of livelihood necessity describes that participation in the *Ikan Bekok* entrepreneurship programme was primarily motivated by livelihood concerns and economic necessity. Participants frequently described financial difficulties, insufficient household income, and increasing family responsibilities as the key reasons for joining the programme. For many participants, the programme represented an opportunity to generate supplementary income and improve household financial stability.

The finding is consistent with previous studies that identify income insecurity and economic vulnerability as important drivers of participation in income-generating activities among low-income communities (Bebbington, 1999; Ellis, 2000). The study has consistently demonstrated that households experiencing financial constraints often pursue alternative livelihood strategies to diversify income sources, strengthen household resilience, and reduce exposure to economic risks (Scoones, 1998; Serrat, 2017). Similarly, low-income households frequently engage in small-scale economic activities and community-based enterprise programmes as a means of coping with financial instability and improving household well-being (Bene, 2020; Rakodi, 2002). In the context of the present study, participants did not necessarily perceive programme participation as an immediate pathway towards entrepreneurship; rather, they viewed it as a practical livelihood strategy for generating supplementary income, improving household welfare, and meeting essential family needs. These findings suggest that participation in traditional food enterprise programmes among B40 communities is primarily driven by livelihood enhancement and economic survival rather than solely by entrepreneurial aspirations

Hence, the finding indicates that, within this context, entrepreneurship functions primarily as a survival and livelihood diversification strategy rather than a purely growth-oriented business aspiration. Consistent with the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), households attempt to bolster their financial capital by diversifying income streams to mitigate economic vulnerability (Su et al., 2021; Quandt et al., 2023).

"I have three children. My eldest has just completed the SPM examination, the second child will be in Form Two next year, and my youngest is two years old. Before moving back to the village, I had completed my diploma and worked at Ampang Hospital, as a dietician. However, because my youngest child was still small and my late mother became seriously ill, I decided to return home to take care of her. There are three siblings in my family, and my elder sister lives in Jeli. Since I was working in the government sector, I could not take long leave, so I eventually decided to resign from my job... I am currently staying with my second brother. I have to put my trust to Allah S.W.T because I need to work and support my children. A neighbour invited me to work at a fish processing place. The encouragement is there, and I believe I can try and rebuild my life slowly. I am only beginning to recover from a difficult period in my life. At the moment, I have to pay RM300 a month for my house. I had applied for the Rumah Mesra Rakyat scheme a long time ago and only found out in January this year that my application had been approved. Coincidentally, I was going through a divorce at that time, but I could not possibly refuse the house. Financially, I was at zero. My monthly income is not enough, and we live very modestly. I receive RM600 a month, including financial assistance from the Social Welfare Department (JKM)." (Informant 2)

Theme 2: Family and Social Support

The theme of family and social support illustrates how the role of family and social support in encouraging programme participation. Participants frequently referred to encouragement from spouses, family members, and social networks when explaining their decision to join the programme. Some participants also indicated that family traditions and recommendations from others influenced their participation.

The finding is consistent with previous studies that emphasise the importance of social relationships and social capital in shaping economic behaviour and participation in community-based initiatives (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000). Family members often provide emotional support, practical assistance, and encouragement that facilitate engagement in livelihood activities and entrepreneurial endeavours (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003). Likewise, social networks can serve as important sources of information, motivation, and access to opportunities, thereby increasing individuals' participation in development programmes and enhancing their capacity to pursue livelihood strategies (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000; Lin, 2001).

Hence, the findings further suggest that the training programme functioned as an important platform for the accumulation of social capital, an asset that is often limited among low-income and informal micro-entrepreneurs. Through interactions with trainers, programme facilitators, and fellow participants, individuals were able to establish interpersonal relationships and informal support systems that may facilitate knowledge sharing, mutual assistance, and future economic collaboration. In the context of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, these social

networks constitute an important livelihood asset that strengthens participants' ability to mobilise resources and pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities (DFID, 1999; Serrat, 2017). In rural entrepreneurial ecosystems, such social capital is invaluable; it actively compensates for the lack of formal institutional support by providing alternative, community-driven channels for market information exchange, collective problem-solving, and resource sharing (Wang et al., 2023; Su et al., 2021). Within the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, these findings can be understood through the concept of social capital. Social relationships and support networks constitute important resources that may increase individuals' willingness and capacity to participate in livelihood-enhancing activities. The findings therefore suggest that strengthening community support mechanisms may contribute to greater participation and sustainability of other traditional food entrepreneurship programmes.

"When I am sick or have a fever, my husband helps me a lot by taking over and completing the orders on my behalf. After returning from office, he will help me with the work. Sometimes he only goes to bed at one or two in the morning. On Fridays, usually he did not sleep at all and continue working... Then, on Saturday, finally getting some rest. He has to do two or three jobs at the same time."
(Informant 5)

Theme 3: Pursuing Economic Opportunities Through Self-Development

The theme of pursuing economic opportunities through self-development demonstrates despite experiencing financial difficulties, participants demonstrated a positive orientation towards learning and self-improvement. Many participants expressed enthusiasm for acquiring new skills, learning from others, and gaining knowledge about market opportunities. Participants also displayed confidence in their ability to learn and adapt to new economic activities. Interestingly, several participants recognised the market potential of *Ikan Bekok* products due to perceived consumer demand and limited market supply. This finding suggests that participants were not solely driven by financial necessity but also exhibited an awareness of potential economic opportunities. Natural capital serves as an indispensable foundation for rural livelihood diversification. The utilization of indigenous resources not only lowers entry barriers for low-income entrepreneurs but also fosters sustainable, place-based traditional food enterprises that contribute to regional cultural preservation (Béné, 2020; Zheng et al., 2023).

The findings demonstrate that human capital serves as the foundational asset within the livelihood portfolio of the participants. The acquisition of entrepreneurial skills and practical knowledge directly diminished their economic vulnerability. By learning the essential operational aspects of food preparation, hygiene and marketing, participants developed the human capital necessary to leverage their available natural and physical resources effectively. This aligns with contemporary entrepreneurship studies, which emphasize that human capital development is the primary driver of livelihood diversification and poverty alleviation in rural community-based enterprises (Wang et al., 2021; Quandt et al., 2023). The programme significantly enhanced participants' human capital through targeted knowledge acquisition and capacity building. This development effectively elevated their self-efficacy and readiness to engage in micro-entrepreneurial activities, aligning with recent literature emphasizing human capital as a critical driver of rural entrepreneurial success and adaptation (Wang et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2022).

*"Yes, this encourages me to look more seriously into the production of Ikan Bekok, considering that nowadays people are increasingly interested in traditional foods. Although there are many modern food outlets, traditional foods still hold a special place in people's hearts, especially Ikan Bekok... I consider myself someone who likes to seize available opportunities to improve my family's financial situation."
(Informant 4)*

Theme 4: Aspirations for Future Advancement

This theme further indicate that participants possessed aspirations that extended beyond immediate income generation. Participants expressed hopes of improving their economic circumstances, planning for the future, and developing small businesses that could contribute to household well-being. Some participants also viewed participation as an opportunity for self-improvement and personal development.

Indeed, these aspirations demonstrate that while immediate financial needs motivated participation, participants also possessed future-oriented goals and expectations. Such findings align with previous studies suggesting that low-income communities often pursue livelihood strategies not only to address current economic difficulties but also to create opportunities for future economic mobility and improved quality of life. With regards to Sustainable Livelihood Framework, these aspirations may be interpreted as desired livelihood outcomes, including improved income security, enhanced capabilities, and greater household resilience. The findings therefore highlight the potential of community-based enterprise programmes to contribute not only to short-term income generation but also to longer-term socio-economic aspirations.

"Once we start doing this, we have to take good care of it. We cannot simply take the capital and do nothing with it. Is there support from the local community? Yes, definitely. Even when we make it just for fun, there is already demand for it. Whenever people want it, our family members make it. We do not even need to sell it actively.

People in the surrounding community can also earn a living from this. There should be opportunities for the development and benefit of others as well. When people are satisfied with what we produce, it makes us happy. We want people to be satisfied with the products that we make. This can increase our self-confidence, and perhaps we can do even more because we already have the basic skills. If there is an opportunity, I would like to export the product. The opportunity is already there." (Informant 8)

Theme 5: Anticipating Challenges and Uncertainties

Although participants expressed optimism regarding programme participation, they also acknowledged several anticipated challenges and uncertainties; concerns relating to knowledge limitations, information sharing, and potential barriers to business participation. Entrepreneurship confirm that inadequate physical infrastructure frequently impedes the transition from technical training to sustainable business operation (Morris et al., 2020; Li et al., 2022). The findings indicate that participants recognised the difficulties associated with sustaining income-generating activities, suggest that motivation and interest alone may not be sufficient to ensure successful participation in enterprise activities. Participants may require

continuous support, mentoring, and access to resources in order to translate their aspirations into sustainable economic outcomes.

From the perspective of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, these challenges reflect the vulnerability context within which low-income households operate. Economic constraints, limited access to information, and insufficient support mechanisms may hinder the ability of participants to fully utilise available livelihood opportunities. Consequently, community-based enterprise programmes should incorporate continuous guidance, capacity building, and support systems to strengthen participants' ability to pursue sustainable livelihood strategies.

"As for the challenges, I do not really know. Right now, I depend on whatever sustenance Allah S.W.T. provides. If Allah gives a lot, then it will be a lot; if Allah gives a little, then it will be a little, God willing. There is one thing that we must always hold on to, and that is the sustenance provided by Allah. If Allah grants abundance, then there will be abundance; if Allah gives only a little, then it will be little. We should not go into business expecting huge profits. Everything depends on Allah. If Allah does not send sustenance, then we will not receive it. First, we depend on Allah, and second, we make our efforts." (Informant 16)

The livelihood outcome synergistic integration of these five livelihood assets projects several critical anticipated outcomes for the participants, primarily driven by the generation of increased household income through diversified, home-based revenue streams. This financial strengthening, combined with enhanced employability, self-reliance, and entrepreneurial confidence stemming from targeted skill development, significantly builds greater economic capacity to absorb financial shocks and rising living costs. Furthermore, the programme fosters stronger community collaboration facilitated by shared learning and expanded social networks, while simultaneously ensuring the preservation of traditional food heritage through the sustainable utilization of local natural resources. Ultimately, these interconnected outcomes demonstrate that participation in the *Ikan Bekok* programme transcends conventional entrepreneurship; it functions as a holistic pathway towards sustainable livelihood improvement, effectively enhancing both household economic resilience and overall community well-being in the face of ongoing economic uncertainties (Su et al., 2021; Quandt et al., 2023).

Contribution of the Study and Conclusion

Overall, the study highlights the importance of understanding the motivations, expectations, and support needs of B40 communities when developing entrepreneurship and community empowerment programmes aimed at promoting sustainable livelihood outcomes. This study explored the motivations, aspirations, and support needs of B40 communities participating in the *Ikan Bekok* entrepreneurship programme in Besut, Terengganu. The findings demonstrate that participants primarily viewed the programme as an opportunity to improve household livelihoods and generate supplementary income rather than as an immediate pathway towards entrepreneurship. Economic hardship, financial responsibilities, and the need for additional income emerged as the principal motivations for participation. The study also revealed the important role of family and social support in encouraging participation in the programme. In addition, participants exhibited positive attitudes towards learning, self-improvement, and recognising potential economic opportunities associated with traditional food enterprises. Despite these aspirations, participants acknowledged various challenges and uncertainties,

indicating the need for continuous support and guidance to ensure meaningful and sustainable participation.

From the perspective of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, participation in the programme reflects an attempt by low-income households to strengthen their livelihood assets and improve household resilience. The findings suggest that traditional food enterprise programmes have the potential to function not only as entrepreneurship initiatives but also as mechanisms for livelihood enhancement and community empowerment.

The study therefore concludes that enterprise-based interventions targeting B40 communities should adopt a holistic and participant-centred approach that addresses economic vulnerability, strengthens human and social capital, and provides sustained support beyond technical training. By understanding participants' motivations and expectations at the pre-enterprise stage, policymakers and programme implementers can better design initiatives that contribute to long-term livelihood sustainability and improved household well-being.

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