

The Rational Choice of Livelihood Diversification Strategies of Migrant Household in Jambi Province, Indonesia

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Abstract: The objective of this research is to analyze the forms of livelihood diversification strategies of migrant households. The research method used a qualitative approach with a case study method supported by interviews, observation, documentation, and extracting the life history of certain respondents. Livelihood diversification carried out by migrants is an effort to survive in the migration location. The migration decisions made are closely related to the aspirations they have and their ability to develop capabilities in their lives. The diversification of livelihood strategies is related to structural diversifications, agricultural/land management diversifications, and income diversifications. The choice of using certain livelihood strategies is based on the rational choice of the migrant.

Keywords: migrant, livelihood diversification strategies, community development.

1. Introduction

A. Background

Migration is the movement of people carried out systematically [26]. Migration is undertaken to seek a better livelihood [33], [27], to seek safety, and as an effort to escape social conflict [24], as well as to adapt to climate change [15], [7]. People migrate for various purposes such as to obtain higher income [13], to achieve better security conditions, due to unequal job opportunities, or because their skills do not match the available jobs [22], [9], [16], to trade, and to escape the monopolies of rulers [19]. Migration also encourages migrating families to involve other family members to migrate to places deemed to offer a promising future and better family welfare [4], [17].

Studies conducted by [14] reveal that migration issues are not only related to efforts to seek family welfare but also to social transformations occurring in broader aspects of migration [31]. Migration encompasses aspects of economic, political, cultural, technological, and demographic changes [14]. Migration is also related to the aspirations and capabilities of migrants to move and have the freedom to choose their place of residence. Settling or moving again becomes a manifestation of decisions made by migrants [14] and [29]. The aspiration-capability framework expressed by [14] reveals that migration aspirations

are functions related to the general life aspirations of society and opportunities to receive geographical structures. Migration capabilities are related to the freedom positively assessed because they can escape pressure as a unit and negatively assessed freedom. Migration capabilities enhance the chances of moving. Analysis of migration aspiration-capability reveals the relationship between transformation or development and increased migration levels [14] and [21].

The population movement process in Indonesia occurs both forcibly and voluntarily. Indonesians were forcibly migrated during the Dutch colonial period [32]. The movement aimed to obtain cheap labor [21] for plantation and construction projects undertaken by the Dutch. This type of migration was the precursor to the transmigration program developed by the Indonesian government [25]. The relocation of transmigrants from their origin regions to inland transmigration areas had social impacts on the lives of transmigrants [18]. The inability to develop agriculture caused transmigrants to face difficulties in developing livelihood systems in the transmigration locations [3], resulting in some transmigrants selling their land to ethnic migrants [25], as happened in Jambi [23]. Jambi has long been a migration destination for the Bugis ethnic group and other migrant ethnicities.

The development of the transmigration program in several transmigration areas in Jambi also experienced delays and did not meet the expected objectives. This was due to issues within the Technical Implementation Unit, which could not optimally absorb transmigrant labor [29] and the delayed development of the Integrated Independent City [23]. Jambi Province has one of the lowest transmigration Technical Implementation Units in terms of agricultural labor absorption, at 10.43 percent, while the highest labor absorption is in Lampung Province at 31.28 percent [23]. The transmigration program in Jambi Province is also developed to become an Integrated Independent City (KTM) and is part of the KTM Generation II development, but this development still faces numerous issues, particularly related to the lack of infrastructure or supporting facilities in transmigration locations [23]. This causes transmigrant residents to move out of the transmigration areas and migrate to

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other regions they consider better [31].

Another migration process is self-initiated or independent migration [25]. Independent migration is generally undertaken by people from the Minangkabau, Batak, and Bugis ethnic groups. The arrival of the Bugis ethnic group in Jambi Province dates back to the 1950s. Jambi has long been a migration destination for the Bugis ethnic group, even when migration transportation was still in the form of sailing boats or using water transportation routes [19]. The Bugis ethnic group was one of the early pioneers who opened land in the Jambi interior. The arrival of transmigrants and migrants from various regions prompted changes in the local community's agricultural system [19].

The differences in asset acquisition methods, availability of supporting facilities, and freedom to access certain fields at migration locations distinguish between the lives of transmigrants and independent migrants. Transmigrants receive life-support facilities consisting of 2 hectares of land per household, 0.25 hectares of land for housing and yard, and 0.75 hectares for the first business land and 1 hectare for the second business land, as well as receiving subsistence assistance of three million five hundred thousand Rupiah per month for 18 months, converted into food items such as rice, side dishes, and other consumable goods [1]. Independent migrants acquire land assets by clearing forests, purchasing land from the indigenous Malay ethnic group, or buying from local village heads who have authority to regulate land purchases in the area. The purchased land becomes a migrant asset.

Chambers and Conway [10] state that livelihood strategies are related to capabilities or assets (resources, claims, and access) and activities needed to meet livelihood needs. Tangible assets can be savings in the form of food or valuable items. Intangible assets include claims and access. The developed strategy must also be able to cope and recover from all pressures and shocks, maintain and enhance capabilities and assets, provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation [30], and contribute to other livelihood sources at the local or global level, whether in the short or long term [10].

Ownership of agricultural land assets, land assets, and houses is obtained by migrants through developing various livelihood strategies or livelihood diversification strategies. Livelihood diversification strategies are related to how communities manage or combine available or owned livelihood assets, respond to changes, and determine priorities to maintain or improve livelihoods [28] and [12].

B. Objectives

This study aims to analyze the forms of livelihood diversification systems developed in the lives of migrant households. Specifically, it aims to: (1) identify the forms of livelihood diversification strategies of migrant households, (2)

identify factors influencing the diversification of migrant household livelihood strategies, and (3) analyze the impact of the diversification of migrant household livelihood strategies. The choice of livelihood strategies developed is analyzed using Coleman's Rational Action Theory.

2. Research Methodology

This research was conducted in Kuala Jambi Subdistrict, Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency, Jambi Province. The research location was intentionally selected (purposive sampling) because the area features two distinct ecosystems: coastal and mangrove, which reflect different types of livelihood strategies. The study employed a qualitative approach supported by quantitative data. The qualitative approach utilized a case study method, employing observation, documentation, in-depth interviews, and supplemented by the extraction of life histories from specific respondents [6]. Quantitative data were gathered using survey methods.

Respondents were chosen using purposive sampling [6], focusing on households migrants who have migrated and successfully developed their livelihoods at the location for more than one generation. The study involved 45 respondents from various ethnic groups who have migrated from various region to Kuala Jambi. Data analysis was carried out in three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and data verification (Miles and Huberman 1992 in [11]).

3. Results and Discussion

A. History of Arrival and Development of Migrants in Kuala Jambi

The initial migrants who opened up the area were the Bugis ethnic group from Kuala Enok, Riau. Subsequently, Javanese migrants also moved into this region. The indigenous population of Kuala Jambi consists of the Jambi Malay and Duano ethnic groups. The arrival of the Bugis in Kuala Jambi followed their migration to various regions in Riau. The areas they settled in include Kuala Jambi with sub-regions such as Tungkal, Nipah Panjang, Mendahare, Teluk Bengkalis, Kuala Lagan, Muara Sabak, Ranau, and Sungai Cambang, eventually establishing themselves in Kampung Laut and Tanjung Solok, Jambi Province.

Migrants households who moved to Kuala Jambi have been living there for more than one generation, with some having established families and even grandchildren who also reside in Kuala Jambi. They came from other areas in Sumatra and from Java. The generational migration to Kuala Jambi is detailed in Table 1.

Based on the data in Table 1, it is evident that the first-generation respondents are aged between 61 and 77 years. The descendants of migrants fall within the age group of 40 to 60

Table 1

Number of respondents by age, age grouping, generation, average age, and age range of migrants in Kuala Jambi, Tanjung Jabung Timur district, Jambi province

Generation	Age Group			Total	Average Age (yr)	Age Group (yr)
	Youth (19-29 yrs)	Adult (30-60 yrs)	Old (above 61 yrs)			
Generation 1	0	5	18	23	70	61-77
Generation 2	0	17	4	21	55	40-60
Generation 3	2	0	0	2	20	19-25
Total	2	22	22	46		

years [5]. Second-generation migrants are those who moved following their families and settled in the migration area. Third-generation descendants are those who relocated from other regions, following their families, and settled in Kuala Jambi. The table illustrates the age group distribution of respondents in this study, who are migrants from Bugis, Javanese, Minangkabau, Batak, Selayar, Sundanese, and Malay ethnic groups, who also migrated from other regions to Kuala Jambi.

B. Household Livelihood Strategies of Migrants in Kuala Jambi

Migrants living in Kuala Jambi employ various livelihood strategies to meet their needs. Their occupations include farming, fishing, trading, and other service enterprises to support their families. Generally, the respondents own agricultural land of various sizes spread across different areas in Kuala Jambi and its surroundings. The agricultural land obtained by transmigrants was distributed by the government at the time of their relocation to Jambi, while the Bugis ethnic group acquired agricultural land by clearing forests, purchasing from local chiefs, or from Malay ethnic individuals who already owned agricultural land there. Other ethnic groups do not own agricultural land but control existing economic assets, such as owning grocery stores, building material stores, and electronics shops.

The agricultural land owned is planted with coconut, areca nut, corn, and secondary crops, which are the primary sources of family income. The land management system involves engaging other parties to manage their agricultural land, either through rental or profit-sharing arrangements, and involving their own family members to jointly manage the agricultural land they own (see Table 2).

Table 2

Patterns of agricultural land management by migrants in Kuala Jambi, Jambi province

Land Management Practices	Respondent	
	N	%
Land rental	13	28,26
Profit sharing	9	19,56
Self-management (family based)	24	52,17
Total	46	100

Land rental is practiced to ensure that owned land is not neglected and claimed by other landowners. The parties trusted to rent the land are those with the same ethnic background, family, and close neighbors. Profit-sharing is also employed in land management, where the proceeds are split 50-50, meaning the landowner receives 50% of the harvest. Commonly, land is jointly managed with children, nephews, and other family relatives.

Besides farming, respondents in this study also work as fishermen to meet their household needs. This occupation is divided into two types: as boat owners or as workers on other fishing boats. The agricultural land, house, and boats owned by respondents are crucial assets for developing livelihood strategies within migrant households. Developing these assets supports the diversification of livelihood strategies employed by migrant households [30].

C. The Existence of Assets as a Factor Influencing the Diversification of Migrant Household Livelihood Strategies

Migrant livelihood strategies in Kuala Jambi are influenced by various factors. One of the most crucial factors is the ownership of assets within the household. The assets owned by respondents are categorized into two types: tangible assets and intangible assets.

1) Tangible Assets

Tangible assets owned by migrant households generally include land, houses, vehicles, and jewelry. These tangible assets are the main sources of livelihood for the residents. Not all residents can own land or a home. Javanese residents find it challenging to own land or gardens in Kuala Jambi unless inherited from their parents.

Migrant residents typically own plantation land averaging 5-10 hectares. This plantation land is not only located in Kuala Jambi but also in areas like Nipah Panjang and Desa Cambang, and other regions. The plantation land can be either inherited or acquired through self-earned efforts. Large plots of land are generally managed with the help of children and hired workers [12], while smaller plots may be managed independently, with children helping during harvest. Besides plantation land, another significant asset owned by migrant residents is their homes. These homes are not only located in Kuala Jambi but also in other sub-districts and even outside the province. Some migrants also have homes in their place of origin or build homes there.

2) Intangible Assets

Intangible assets are non-physical assets that migrants possess, aiding them in developing livelihood strategies. These assets include claims or access rights. Claims can support the development of tangible assets, while access rights support the development of other livelihood strategies [30]. These intangible assets, such as ethnic privileges or local citizenship status, play an essential role. Although differences are not visibly apparent in daily life among individuals of different ethnicities, during job selection or providing information about job opportunities, individuals of the same ethnicity are often prioritized (see Figure 1).

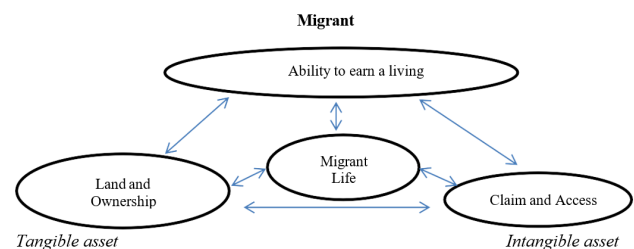


Fig. 1. Ownership of Tangible and Intangible Assets by Respondents as Support for Their Livelihood Strategies (Source: developed from [10])

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the ability to earn a livelihood in the lives of migrants, influenced by tangible assets such as savings and resources like agricultural land, boats for fishing, and motor vehicles used for motorcycle taxi services when not fishing or farming. Intangible assets include claims and access rights that significantly impact their ability to

utilize savings and resources to support livelihood efforts and diversify livelihood strategies within migrant households [29].

D. Diversification of Migrant Household Livelihood Strategies

The analysis of livelihood strategy diversification models by [20] identifies three primary patterns of livelihood strategy diversification, which can generally be observed among Indonesian farmers [17]. However, the prevalence of these patterns varies due to the diverse nature of agricultural life in Indonesia. The common forms of livelihood strategy diversification among Indonesian farming households are as follows: (i) Agricultural Diversification: This involves farmers engaging in new activities that may be non-traditional, incorporating a variety of new crops and livestock into their agricultural practices; (ii) Structural Diversification: This pattern is characterized by the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses, thereby repurposing land to support alternative livelihoods; (iii) Income Diversification: This form involves farmers utilizing specific agricultural assets for non-agricultural activities, thereby generating income from sources outside traditional farming. These strategies collectively help farmers mitigate risks and improve their economic stability amidst the challenges of agricultural life.

E. Forms of Migrant Household Livelihood Strategy Diversification

1) Agricultural Diversification

Respondents develop activities in other agricultural sectors to support family income [4]. This approach is one of the key livelihood strategies employed by migrant households [30] and manifests through agricultural diversification. For instance, many of these households plant pineapples between their coconut plantations and establish fish ponds among the coconut trees. Such diversification efforts are driven by the need to counteract the low price of coconuts. By incorporating new crops and utilizing agricultural land for fish farming, farmers can generate additional income, which becomes crucial when the price of coconuts hovers around Rp 800. This price point is insufficient to meet the basic needs of their households [17]. As a result, diversifying agricultural activities not only helps stabilize their income but also enhances their resilience against market fluctuations and economic uncertainties.

2) Structural Diversification

Structural diversification is a prevalent practice among households in Kuala Jambi as a means of coping with economic challenges. For example, Mr. Mus, a 44-year-old resident, has adapted his coconut plantation by constructing a building specifically designed for swiftlets to nest. This innovative approach allows him to generate income through the sale of swiftlet nests, which are highly valued. Additionally, some residents have transformed similar buildings into natural-themed guesthouses, attracting tourists and providing an

alternative revenue stream. This strategy is particularly effective in mitigating the economic difficulties caused by the declining prices of coconut and areca nuts, which have traditionally been the primary sources of income for many local farmers. Migrants who possess substantial assets often leverage these resources to create new income sources. For instance, both Mr. Mus and Mrs. An, a 55-year-old resident, have successfully converted non-productive agricultural land into profitable ventures. Mr. Mus has turned part of his land into a house, while Mrs. An has established a food stall aimed at catering to tourists in Tanjung Solok. These examples highlight how structural diversification can transform underutilized land into valuable business opportunities, thus enhancing the economic resilience of these households.

Structural diversification tends to be more common among second-generation migrants, for whom agriculture is no longer the primary source of household income. These individuals are often more inclined to explore and invest in non-agricultural ventures. Access to local officials and village leaders plays a crucial role in this process. These officials can facilitate business development by easing the process of obtaining necessary permits and providing support through relevant organizations. The involvement of local leadership is instrumental in helping entrepreneurs navigate bureaucratic hurdles and establish their businesses more efficiently [8].

Overall, structural diversification serves as a vital strategy for economic adaptation and sustainability among migrant households in Kuala Jambi. By repurposing agricultural land and capitalizing on alternative income sources, these families can better withstand economic fluctuations and improve their overall livelihoods. This approach not only addresses immediate financial needs but also contributes to the long-term economic stability of the community.

3) Income Diversification

Migrant households diversify their income through various means. Engaging in jobs like selling salted fish, motorcycle taxi services, construction labor, and working as crew members on boats are common during off-peak farming seasons. Income diversification allows residents to develop new skills, such as construction work, thereby ensuring family needs are met [4]. Migrants often find employment with others of the same ethnicity, which eases job acquisition. For example, Mr. Dan (70 years old) works at a grocery store owned by a resident of Tanjung Solok while also being a fisherman. Since fishing is not a daily activity, this allows him to take on other jobs to support his household. Job opportunities often come from local community members.

Income diversification is typically practiced by respondents with small agricultural plots [8], whose livelihood strategies alone do not fulfill all family needs. An overview of migrant household livelihood diversification is presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Forms of migrant household livelihood diversification in Kuala Jambi, Jambi province

Livelihood Diversity	Supporting Factors	Actors
Agriculture diversification	Agriculture land	First generation migrant
Structural diversification	Access to land, supporting assets	Second generation migrant
Income diversification	Network, ethnic background, Individual skills	Second generation migrant

F. Impact of Livelihood Strategy Diversification on Migrant Life

The development of various livelihood strategy diversifications by respondents has impacted economic stability, ensuring material sufficiency that allows them to remain in Kuala Jambi without seeking new migration destinations. The ability to diversify livelihood strategies creates opportunities to expand their business units into broader aspects.

Migrant household livelihood diversification is carried out to sustain efforts in meeting household needs. The presence of claims, assets, and resource ownership supports the variety of livelihood diversifications that migrant households can develop. The choice of livelihood strategies by migrants is adapted to the supporting and inhibiting factors in their new settlement area, which has different cultural and geographical backgrounds compared to their previous living conditions. The Rational Choice Theory, based on Coleman's perspective, reveals that actors or individuals are crucial in realizing social actions [5]. Migrants, as actors, undertake specific actions to achieve their interests and strive to maximize these interests. Migrants can control land in their migration locations driven by particular interests, such as improving and achieving a better future for their families.

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that migrant households in Kuala Jambi adopt various livelihood diversification strategies to enhance their economic sustainability. These strategies include integrating pineapple cultivation with coconut plantations, creating fish ponds among coconut trees, constructing swiftlet nesting structures within the plantations, and taking up non-agricultural jobs such as construction work. The diversification of these livelihood strategies is significantly influenced by the ethnic background of the migrants, fostering cooperation among the community members. This diversification has positively impacted the economic conditions of the residents, thereby supporting their continued residence in Kuala Jambi and diminishing their inclination to migrate elsewhere.

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