

Understanding Resettlement Success Across Context: A Thematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Displaced individuals often find themselves detached from their communities, socio-economic resources, and cultural values. Displacement is commonly brought about by the absence of thorough resettlement frameworks that can promote fairness and influence the livelihoods of these individuals. Previous research contended that mere legislation is insufficient to protect people's welfare and livelihood, and there is an urgent requirement to transition from well-intentioned laws to effective practices. Therefore, this paper aims to assess and examine the elements that affect resettlement results and influence resettlement success in studies conducted between the years 2020 and 2024. A thematic analysis was conducted on relevant literature published between the years 2020 and 2024. The results showed that there are five (5) factors influencing resettlement success and community livelihood: (1) governance and policy framework; (2) community and social dynamic; (3) economic and livelihood consideration; (4) infrastructure and physical environment; and (5) education and long-term support. These findings highlighted that resettlement is not merely a logistical challenge but a profoundly social, economic, and cultural issue.

Keywords: resettlement; sustainable livelihood; community adaptation; forced displacement; thematic review.

INTRODUCTION

Resettlement is an act of relocating people to a different place, which involves careful planning and execution of measures to safeguard and potentially enhance livelihoods, social networks, and cultural ties of the displaced communities in their new environment [1]. Individuals who are displaced frequently find themselves removed from their communities, socioeconomic resources, and customary habits [2] due to the absence of thorough resettlement frameworks that can promote fairness and impact the livelihoods of these communities [3]. Previous research contends that mere legislation is insufficient to protect people's welfare and livelihood. They often fall short due to a lack of consideration for the displaced communities' socioeconomic, cultural and psychological needs, which leads to economic, social, and psychological distress [4], [5], [6], [7], [8]. This highlights the significant need to identify success factors of resettlement outcomes, which will ensure that resettlement projects do not merely relocate individuals but actively contribute to their long-term well-being and social integration [1], [9], [10]. Therefore, this paper aims to assess and examine the factors that affect resettlement results and influence resettlement success, as highlighted in studies conducted between 2020 and 2024, guided by the central research question (RQ):

Main RQ: How can successful resettlement outcomes be achieved for sustainable livelihood adaptation?

Hence, the objective of this paper is to identify factors influencing resettlement success to ensure sustainable livelihood adaptation among displaced communities.

METHODOLOGY

A thematic analysis utilising *ATLAS.ti 24* was used as the main analytical instrument, as proposed by Zairul

(2020, 2021b, 2021a) and Zairul et al., (2022, 2023) [11], [12], [13], [16], [17], where the aforementioned method has a copyright protection [17] and the process remains PRISMA-compliant in terms of screening transparency.

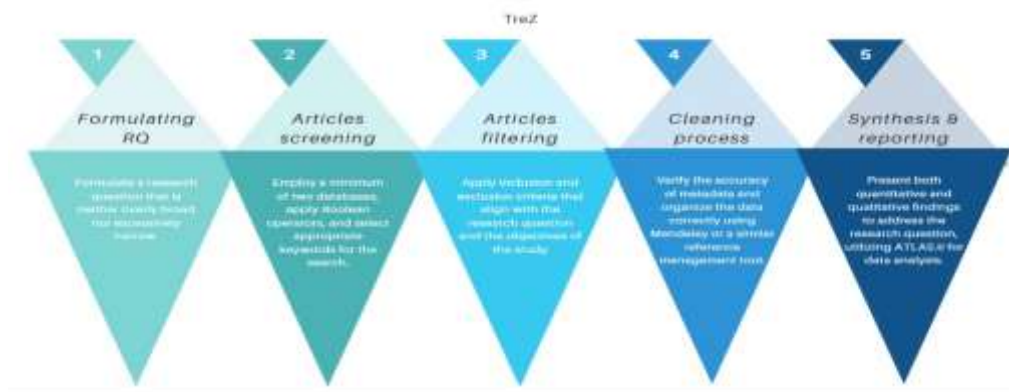


Figure 1. Thematic review FlowZ (TreZ) [17].

This technique employed thematic analysis methods during a literature review to identify trends and formulate themes through a comprehensive examination of the topic. As this study aims to assess and examine the elements that affect resettlement results and influence resettlement success, as discussed in the literature from 2020 to 2024, the thematic review has allowed the systematic identification and analysis of the themes that emerge from the literature review on the factors influencing types of resettlement outcomes. The methodology for conducting a thematic analysis involved a careful selection of relevant literature with adherence to the following norms:

1. Publications from the year 2020 to 2024;
2. Inclusion of one keyword or more: Resettlement, Relocation or Displacement; and
3. Focusing on resettlement outcomes worldwide.

To ensure a comprehensive analysis and the coverage of a wide range of factors that influence a successful resettlement outcome, this study did not confine itself to specific resettlement project origins and fields of study. This approach allowed for the identification of trends and patterns across various contexts and geographic locations, providing a detailed understanding of the factors that consistently impacted resettlement outcomes, regardless of regional or cultural differences. The review was conducted using Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) based on the criteria and search string presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Search strings from Scopus and Web of Science (WoS)

	Keywords/Search String	Results
SCOPUS	TITLE-ABS-KEY (resettlement AND outcomes) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2025	400 results
	TITLE-ABS-KEY (resettlement AND outcomes) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2025 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))	316 results
	TITLE-ABS-KEY (resettlement AND outcomes) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2025 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD , "Resettlement") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD , "Livelihood") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD , "Displacement") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD , "Wellbeing") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD , "Risk Factor") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD , "Qualitative Research"))	<u>102 results</u>
WoS	"resettlement outcomes" (All Fields)	66 results
	(Refined By) <Document Types> Review Articles; <Publication Years> 2020,2021,2022,2023 and 2024.	<u>48 results</u>
Total number of articles to be reviewed		150 results

Table 1 shows that the initial search revealed 400 articles from Scopus. Then, the search was refined and filtered

by the following indicators: (1) English Language; (2) publication year from 2020 until 2024; (3) limit to exact keywords which includes “Resettlement,” “Livelihood,” “Displacement,” “Wellbeing,” “Risk Factor,” and “Qualitative Research.” Subsequently, the number of articles had reduced to 102 articles. Meanwhile, a literature search from the Web of Science initially came to 66 articles. The search result was filtered to limit the selection of articles from the year 2020 until 2024, where the research results had reduced to 48, as shown in Table 1. This resulted in a total of 150 articles that need to be reviewed. During the review process, some of the articles were also found incomplete, have a broken link or overlapped, and showed incomplete metadata. Moreover, other review papers were excluded from the thematic review process, as this study only included journals with primary data. Therefore, the final paper to be reviewed went down to 48 articles. Figure 1 shows the method of inclusion and exclusion criteria of the literature search for thematic review [11].

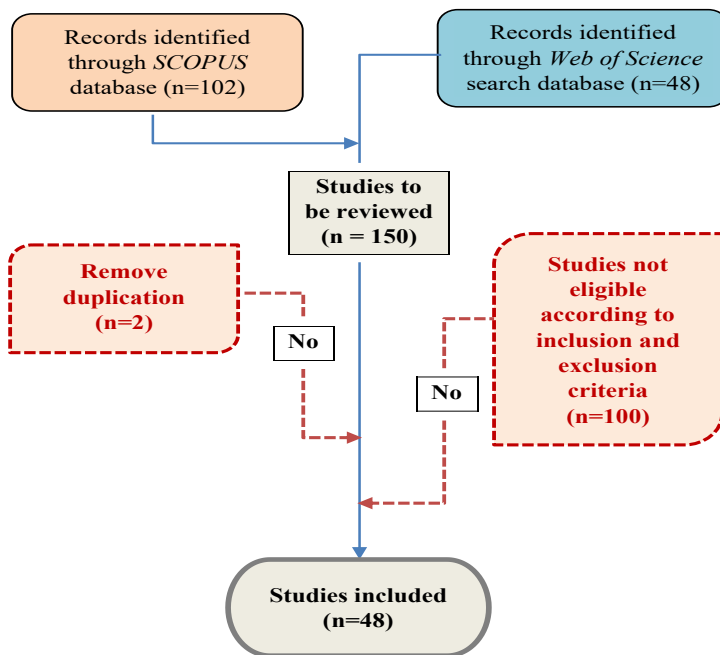


Figure 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria in the thematic review

The selected journal articles for further review and analysis were subsequently uploaded into *ATLAS.ti 24* as the main documents, and the articles were classified into several categories: 1) Year; 2) Country; and 3) Theme. This classification allows for analysis based on annual publications and discussion trends over time.

Coding and Thematic Process

To enhance methodological transparency, the study adopts a systematic, iterative coding process consistent with established qualitative coding practices [18]. Following journal and articles selection as mentioned in the previous section, literature data were analysed through three progressive stages of coding as shown in Figure 3 which are (1) open coding; (2) axial, and (3) selective coding using *Atlas.ti24* software.

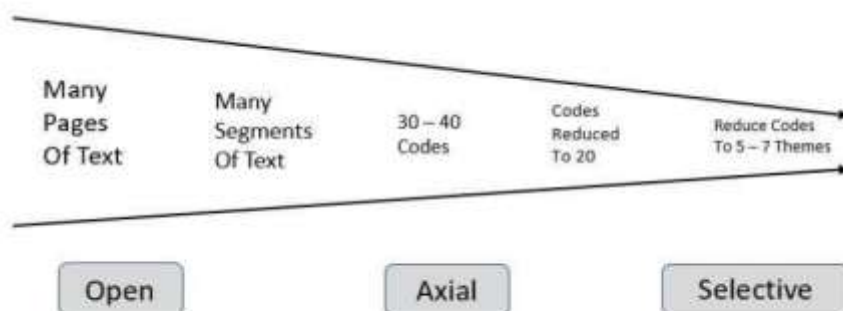


Figure 3. Overview on coding and thematic process [18]

This staged approach enables the researcher to move from initial meaning units to conceptually integrated themes through constant comparison and refinement [18]. During open coding, articles were examined line-by-line to identify recurrent concepts and experiential indicators. These initial codes were then refined through axial coding, during which relationships among codes were examined to form higher-order categories. Finally, selective coding was employed to integrate these categories into core themes that directly address the research objectives. Rather than relying on intercoder reliability which often associated with positivist qualitative traditions, this study emphasises procedural rigour, transparency, and analytic consistency. Coding decisions were continuously revisited through iterative reading, memo writing, and constant comparison across data sources, ensuring thematic stability and coherence. As noted by Williams and Moser (2019), qualitative validity is strengthened not through numerical agreement between coders, but through a clearly articulated and repeatable analytic process that demonstrates how meaning is constructed from the data [18]. This approach allows the findings to be positioned more critically within the broader literature, highlighting points of convergence and divergence with existing studies resettlement success.

RESULTS

Quantitative Findings

From the total of 48 articles reviewed, this study further analysed the geographical dispersion of these publications to highlight the global research patterns on factors influencing resettlement success. Table 2 and Figure 4 show the geographical dispersion of the abovementioned publications.

Table 2. Geographical dispersion of journals that discussed on resettlement (year 2020 until 2024)

Region	Countries and Number of Journals	Total Number of Journals
Asia	Afghanistan (2), Bangladesh (2), China (7), India (3), Jakarta (1), Laos (1), Malaysia (1), Maldives (1), Pakistan (2), Philippines (2), Sri Lanka (1), Thailand (1), and Vietnam (3)	28
Sub-Saharan Africa	Ethiopia (2), Ghana (1), Malawi (1), Mozambique (1), Nairobi (1), Rwanda (1), Sudan (1), Uganda (2), and Zimbabwe (3)	14
Latin America	Brazil (1), Dominican Republic (1), and Peru (1)	3
Oceania	Australia (1) and New Zealand (1)	2
North America	Canada (2)	2
Europe	Sweden (1)	1



Figure 4. Illustration on geographical dispersion of journals that discussed on resettlement (year 2020 until 2024)

This review reveals a significant geographical focus on Asian countries for resettlement studies between the year 2020 to 2024 potentially due to the regions' high rate of community resettlement and displacement from such as urbanisation, natural disasters and sociopolitical challenges. Following this, a thematic review of these 48 articles identified 65 initial codes related to factors influencing resettlement success. Similar codes were merged, and the final codes used in this study were 28 codes. The codes were then grouped into five (5) themes, which are: (1) governance and policy framework; (2) community and social dynamic; (3) economic and livelihood consideration; (4) infrastructure and physical environment; and (5) education and long-term support. The quantity of journal articles analysed by theme and on an annual basis is summarised in Table 3:

Table 3. Issuance of themes presented on an annual basis

Theme/Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Totals
Theme 1: Governance and Policy Framework	7	3	6	4	3	23
Theme 2: Community and Social Dynamic	6	4	3	2	3	18
Theme 3: Economic and Livelihood Considerations	5	1	-	5	2	13
Theme 4: Infrastructure and Physical Environment	5	3	3	6	2	19
Theme 5: Education and Long-Term Support	-	1	-	-	1	2

Table 3 shows that themes related to governance and policy framework were the most discussed (23 articles), followed by infrastructure and physical environment (19 articles), and community and social dynamics (18 articles). On the other hand, Table 4 shows a comprehensive categorisation of articles based on different aspects of resettlement success factors.

Table 4. Author versus Themes

Reference/ Author/The me	Theme 1 Governance and Policy Framework	Theme 2 Community and Social Dynamic	Theme 3 Economic and Livelihood Consideration	Theme 4 Infrastructure and Physical Environment	Theme 5 Education and Long- Term Support
[19] Manduna, (2023)	/	-	-	-	-
[20] Hanapi et al., (2023)	-	-	-	/	-
[21] Hosseini et al., (2024)	-	/	-	-	-
[22] Siriwardhana et al., (2021)	-	/	-	-	-
[23] Uwayezu & T. de Vries, (2020)	/	/	-	/	-
[24] Zhang et al., (2022)	-	-	-	/	-
[25] Mayer et al., (2021)	-	-	-	/	-
[26] Nel & Mabhena, (2021)	-	-	/	/	-
[27] Otsuki, (2023)	-	-	-	/	-
[28] E. Miller et al., (2024)	-	/	-	/	/
[29] Yang et al., (2023)	/	-	/	-	-
[30] Rickard, (2020)	-	/	-	-	-
[31] Haque & Jakariya, (2023)	/	-	-	-	-
[32] Thiyagarajan & Khudrathullah Iqbal, (2020)	-	-	/	/	-
[33] Singto et al., (2021)	/	/	-	-	-

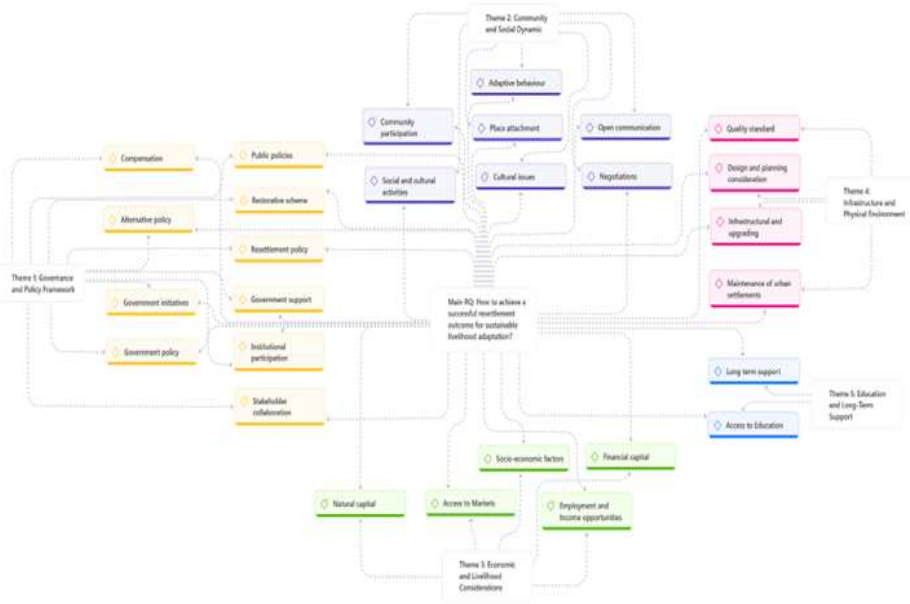
[34] Hyndman, (2022)	/	-	-	-	-
[35] Samah, (2022)	/	-	-	-	-
[36] Aronsson & Price, (2024)	-	/	-	-	-
[37] Blake & Barney, (2022)	/	-	-	-	-
[38] Cheo et al., (2022)	-	/	-	-	-
[39] Sahoo & Jojo, (2020)	/	-	-	-	-
[40] Azfa et al., (2022)	-	/	-	-	-
[41] Collado & Potangaroa, (2023)	-	/	-	-	-
[42] Marlowe et al., (2024)	/	-	-	-	-
[43] Aboda et al., (2023)	-	-	-	/	-
[2] Parvin et al., (2022)	-	-	-	/	-
[44] Ma et al., (2024)	-	-	/	-	-
[45] Janzen et al., (2022)	-	/	-	-	-
[46] Sun et al., (2023)	-	-	/	-	-
[48] Bergmann, (2021)	-	/	-	-	-
[49] Lindegaard, (2020)	/	-	-	-	-
[50] Ali et al., (2022)	/	-	-	-	-
[51] Johansson, (2020)	-	/	-	-	-
[52] See & Wilmsen, (2020)	/	-	-	/	-
[53] Wang, (2023)	-	/	-	/	-
[54] Jain & Bazaz, (2020)	/	-	/	-	-
[55] Sharp et al., (2020)	-	-	/	-	-
[56] Widyaningsih & Van den Broeck, (2021)	/	-	-	/	-
[57] Chen et al., (2021)	/	/	-	-	/
[58] Jensen et al., (2020)	/	-	-	/	-
[59] Wayessa & Nygren, (2023)	/	-	/	-	-
[60] P.H Ty, (2023)	-	-	-	/	-
[61] Haile, (2024)	-	-	-	/	-
[62] Ahmad et al., (2024)	/	-	-	-	-
[63] Chipenda, (2024)	-	-	/	-	-
[64] Marx et al., (2020)	/	/	-	-	-
[65] F. Miller et al., (2022)	/	-	-	/	-
[66] Qiu et al., (2020)	-	/	-	-	-

Qualitative Findings

Overall view on how the RQ is answered through thematic review

As mentioned in the previous section, the review shows that there are five (5) themes, which have been identified as factors influencing resettlement success and discussed to ensure community livelihood which includes: (1)

governance and policy framework; (2) community and social dynamic; (3) economic and livelihood consideration; (4) infrastructure and physical environment; and (5) education and long-term support. An overall view of the thematic reviews is presented in Figure 5:



Theme 1: Governance and policy framework

The roles of governance and policies in ensuring resettlement success is not just about establishing guidelines but also about their implementation and adaptability in response to complex, evolving challenges

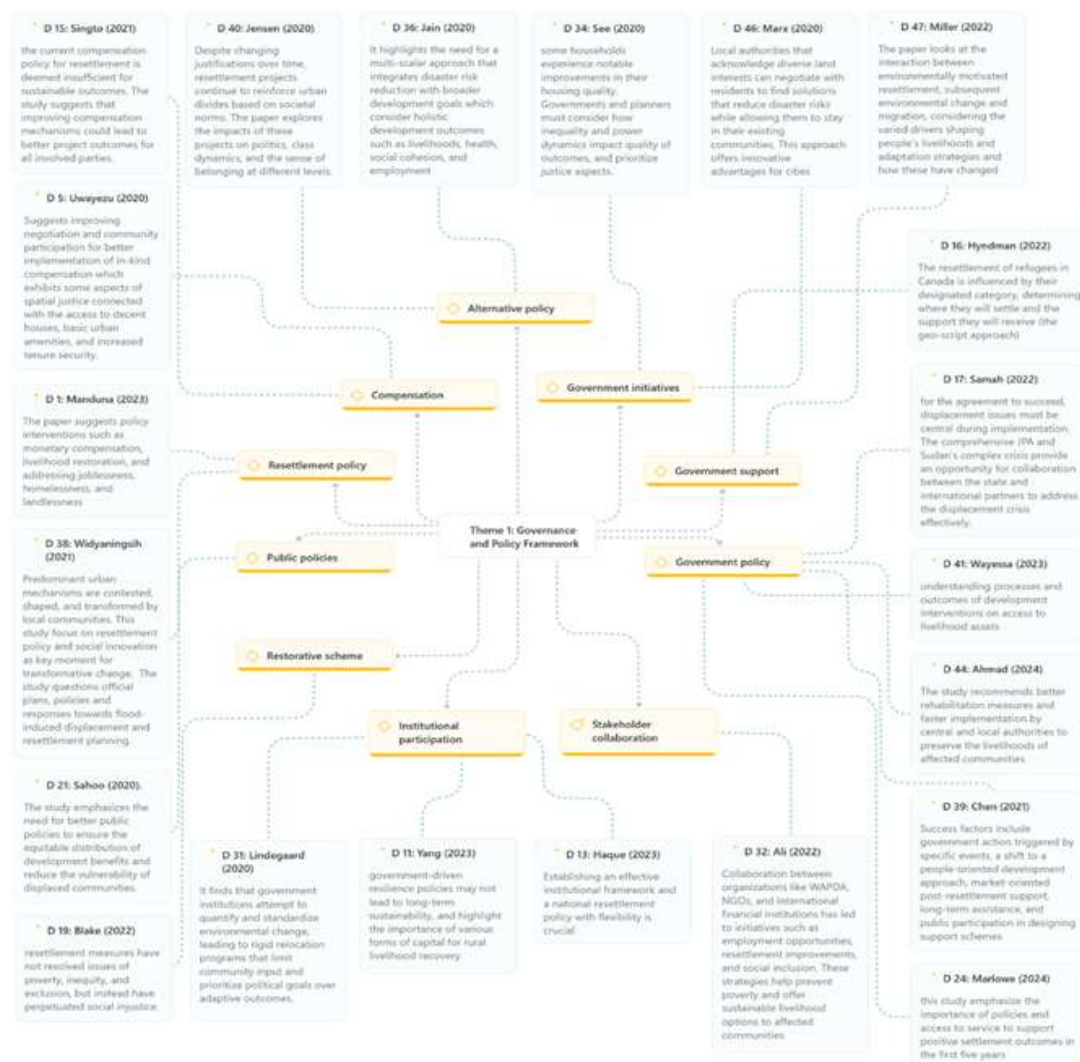


Figure 6. Success factors related to governance and policy frameworks

Governance and policy frameworks serve as the backbone of successful resettlement programmes, with effective policies playing a critical role in facilitating positive settlement outcomes. Marlowe et al., (2024) highlighted that access to services and well-structured policies in the initial five years of resettlement are pivotal for sustainable resettlement outcomes [42]. Samah (2022) emphasised that displacement issues must be central during the implementation phase of agreements, using the Sudanese context to illustrate how comprehensive frameworks can offer avenues for collaboration between states and international partners to address displacement crises [35]. Furthermore, Ahmad et al., (2024) underscored the need for timely rehabilitation measures and faster implementation by central and local authorities to safeguard the livelihoods of affected populations [62]. Chen et al., (2021) added depth to this discussion, identifying success factors such as government action triggered by specific events, a shift to people-oriented approaches, and the integration of public participation in post-resettlement support schemes [57]. Similarly, Wayessa & Nygren, (2023) underscored the importance of understanding how development interventions impact access to livelihood assets, reinforcing the need for targeted and responsive policies [59].

The broader governance landscape also requires consideration of government initiatives, support, and alternative policies. See & Wilmsen, (2020) urged governments and planners to consider how inequalities and power dynamics influence outcomes, advocating for justice-oriented approaches [52]. Marx et al., (2020) took this further, suggesting that local authorities, by recognising diverse land interests, can negotiate innovative solutions that reduce disaster risks while enabling displaced populations to remain in their communities [64]. Meanwhile, Hyndman (2022) introduced the concept of the geo-script approach in Canada, showing how resettlement categories determine the settlement location and level of support provided to refugees [34]. Miller et al., (2022) echoed the importance of government support, examining how it shapes the interaction between environmentally motivated resettlement, environmental change, and livelihoods [65]. The call for more holistic and integrated policies is strongly advocated by Jain & Bazaz (2020), who proposes a multi-scalar approach combining disaster risk reduction with broader development goals [54], while Jensen et al., (2020) critiqued how resettlement projects often reinforce urban divides through societal norms [58].

Finally, the transformative potential of resettlement policies is emphasised by several studies. Widyaningsih & Van den Broeck (2021) highlighted the importance of social innovation as a key driver for transformative change, questioning official plans and responses to flood-induced displacement [56]. Similarly, Manduna (2023) called for targeted policy interventions, such as monetary compensation and livelihood restoration, to address issues like joblessness and homelessness [19]. The need for better public policies is reinforced by Sahoo & Jojo (2020), who stresses equitable development benefits and reducing community vulnerabilities [39]. However, Blake & Barney (2022) critiqued the failure of current restorative schemes to address underlying issues of poverty, inequity, and social injustice, suggesting that livelihood restoration measures often perpetuate rather than resolve systemic challenges [37].

Apart from policies, compensation and stakeholders' collaboration are cornerstones of governance and policy frameworks in resettlement programmes, which also influence the socioeconomic well-being of displaced populations and the overall success of resettlement outcomes as well as bridging the gap between policy formulation and practical implementation in resettlement programmes. However, Singto et al., (2021) critiqued existing compensation policies as insufficient for achieving sustainable results, arguing for improved mechanisms that address the diverse needs of resettled communities [33]. The study emphasises that comprehensive compensation measures, including financial and non-financial support, can lead to more equitable and effective project outcomes. Similarly, Uwayezu & T. de Vries (2020) advocated for a participatory approach to compensation, suggesting that enhanced negotiation processes and greater community involvement in the design and implementation of in-kind compensation are critical for fostering trust and ensuring the fair distribution of resources [23]. Ali et al., (2022) underscored the role of multi-stakeholder partnerships, such as those between WAPDA, NGOs, and international financial institutions, in promoting social inclusion and sustainable livelihood opportunities [50]. These collaborative efforts have led to significant improvements in resettlement infrastructure, helping to prevent poverty and foster long-term success for affected communities. However, the quality of institutional participation often determines the success or failure of collaborative efforts. Lindegaard (2020) critiqued government institutions for quantifying and standardising environmental changes at the expense of community input, resulting in rigid relocation programmes that prioritise political objectives over adaptive outcomes [49]. Haque & Jakariya (2023) reinforced the need for a flexible institutional framework in Bangladesh, arguing that the absence of such a structure has hindered comprehensive resettlement planning

[31]. On the other hand, Yang et al., (2023) found that institutional participation, while providing immediate support, can undermine community self-reliance in disaster recovery, highlighting the need for a balanced approach that empowers communities while ensuring adequate institutional support [29].

Theme 2: Community and social dynamic

Community and social dynamics are crucial to determine how well communities can cope with the changes brought about by resettlement, making these factors critical for long-term success. This section critically analyses the factors related to community and social dynamics, emphasising how adaptive behaviour, cultural sensitivity, community participation, and effective communication foster stronger, more cohesive resettled communities. Adaptive behaviour is a critical factor in ensuring the successful integration of displaced individuals within resettled communities. Janzen et al., (2022) emphasised the importance of a systemic approach, advocating for a theory of change to address the complexities involved in integration [45]. This framework improves resettlement outcomes by enhancing community-level practices and informing public policy. Hosseini et al., (2024) complemented this by exploring how cultural adaptation influences the effectiveness of resettlement programmes [21]. The study highlights that addressing daily stressors, incorporating faith and cultural beliefs into coping mechanisms, and mitigating feelings of isolation are pivotal for improving the psychosocial resilience of displaced populations.

Cultural issues also play a central role in shaping resettlement outcomes. Aronsson & Price, (2024) and E. Miller et al., (2024) underscored the significance of cultural wealth and social connections in fostering a sense of belonging and improving resettlement success [28], [36]. Siriwardhana et al., (2021) provided a more granular perspective, focusing on post-disaster resettlement in Sri Lanka and showing how cultural factors, such as ethnicity, religion, and livelihood practices, contribute to sustainable community resettlement [22]. Together, these studies illustrate that integrating cultural considerations into resettlement planning not only preserves social cohesion but also enhances the long-term viability of resettled communities.

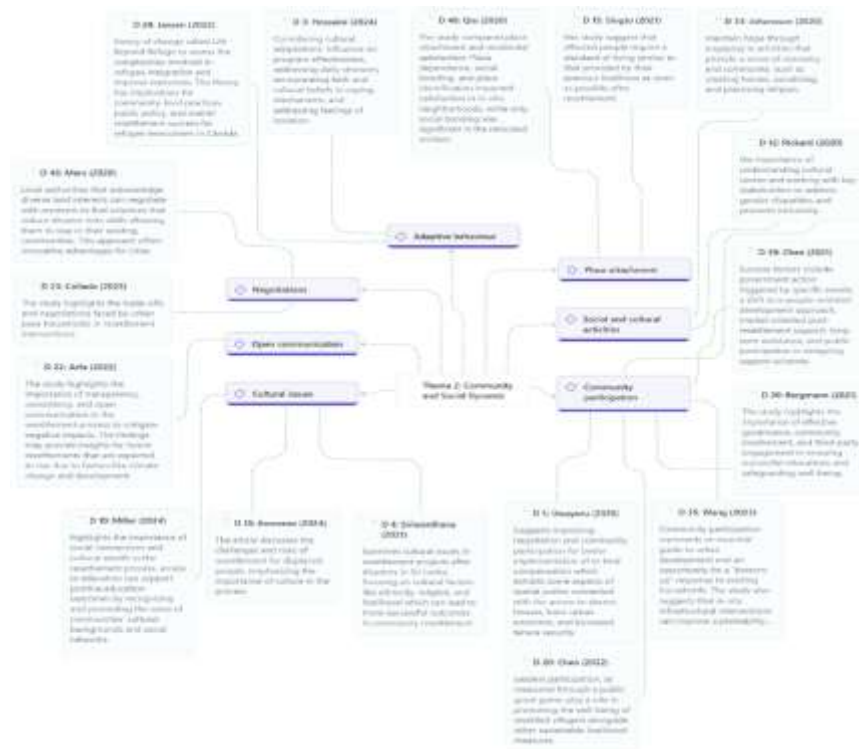
The concept of place attachment profoundly influences the well-being and satisfaction of resettled populations. Qiu et al., (2020) highlighted that place dependence, social bonding, and place identification significantly impact residential satisfaction, particularly in in-situ neighbourhoods. However, relocated enclaves rely more heavily on social bonding as the key determinant of satisfaction [66]. Singto et al., (2021) further stressed that resettlement must ensure that affected people achieve a standard of living similar to their previous livelihoods, as this continuity fosters a stronger sense of attachment to their new environments [33].

Social and cultural activities are equally essential for maintaining hope and normalcy during resettlement transitions. Johansson (2020) illustrated that engaging in activities such as creating homes, socialising, and practising religion provides a sense of stability and community for resettled individuals [51]. Rickard (2020) added that understanding cultural norms and engaging with stakeholders to address gender disparities can promote inclusivity and improve the overall resettlement experience [30]. These findings highlight that fostering community engagement and cultural expression plays a vital role in enhancing the quality of life for resettled populations.

Community participation emerges as a cornerstone for sustainable resettlement practices. Uwayezu & T. de Vries (2020) advocated for greater community involvement in resettlement planning, suggesting that participatory approaches improve access to decent housing, basic urban amenities, and tenure security [23]. Chen et al., (2021) identified public participation in designing support schemes as a success factor, while Bergmann (2021) emphasised the importance of third-party engagement alongside community involvement [48], [57]. Cheo et al., (2022) provided evidence that leaders' participation can enhance the well-being of resettled villagers, and Wang (2023) framed community participation as an essential guide to urban development, promoting a "bottom-up" response that addresses the unique needs of existing households [38], [53].

Transparent communication and effective negotiations are indispensable for fostering trust and collaboration in resettlement programmes. Azfa et al., (2022) highlighted the critical role of transparency, consistency, and open communication in mitigating the negative impacts of resettlement [40]. The study suggests that these elements are particularly important, considering emerging challenges such as climate change, which is expected to increase the frequency of resettlement initiatives. By ensuring open channels of communication, policymakers and stakeholders can address concerns early, reducing resistance and fostering trust among affected populations.

Negotiations also play a pivotal role in determining the success of resettlement projects. Marx et al., (2020) illustrated that when local authorities acknowledge diverse land interests, they can negotiate solutions that reduce disaster risks while allowing displaced individuals to remain in their communities [64]. This approach not only minimises disruption but also offers innovative urban development opportunities. Conversely, Collado & Potangaroa (2023) critiqued the trade-offs and power imbalances inherent in many resettlement programmes, noting that restrictive social norms imposed in new resettlement areas can lead to sentiments of captivity and immobility [41]. The study exposes a disconnect between the political rhetoric of socioenvironmental justice and the lived experiences of resettled individuals, underscoring the need for more inclusive and equitable negotiation processes.



financial, combined with improved coping behaviours, significantly boosts household resilience in resettlement contexts [44]. Together, these studies reveal the critical importance of fostering access to and sustainable use of natural and financial resources as part of resettlement strategies.

The integration of socioeconomic considerations into resettlement planning is pivotal for fostering sustainable outcomes. Jain & Bazaz (2020) advocated for a multi-scalar approach that aligns disaster risk reduction with broader development goals, including livelihoods, health, and social cohesion [54]. This holistic approach ensures that resettlement programmes address not only immediate needs but also long-term socioeconomic stability. Thiagarajan & Khudrathullah Iqbal (2020) reinforced the importance of socioeconomic planning by proposing alternative layouts for residential units, which improve economic conditions while reducing resource demands on governing authorities [32]. In addition to these socioeconomic measures, benefit-sharing models offer a promising avenue for achieving equitable and sustainable resettlement outcomes. Sun et al., (2023) demonstrated the feasibility of such models, where a development fund generated from resources such as electricity income can provide long-term benefits for both resettlers and other stakeholders [46]. These findings highlight the potential of socioeconomic planning and collaborative benefit-sharing initiatives to ensure that resettlement programmes not only address displacement but also create pathways for sustained economic growth and community development. Success factors of resettlement outcomes related to economic and livelihood considerations emphasise the interconnectedness of employment, natural and financial capital, and socioeconomic planning. By addressing these factors through holistic, inclusive, and collaborative approaches, resettlement programmes can significantly enhance the resilience and economic stability of displaced populations.



Figure 8. Success factors related to economic and livelihood considerations

Theme 4: Infrastructure and physical environment

The success of resettlement projects also relies on the infrastructure and physical environment which can improve the liveability of new settlements. Effective design and planning are fundamental to creating sustainable resettlement outcomes, as they shape the physical and social environments of displaced populations. Several studies emphasise the need for people-centric planning that prioritises access to livelihoods, cultural considerations, and long-term adaptability. Thiagarajan & Khudrathullah Iqbal (2020) proposed alternative residential layouts that integrate sustained income sources, enabling resettled individuals to rebuild their livelihoods while reducing maintenance burdens on authorities [32]. Similarly, Ty (2023) highlighted the importance of selecting suitable resettlement sites that provide access to job opportunities, facilitating the economic recovery of displaced households [60]. Parvin et al., (2022) further stressed that design schemes must consider sociocultural aspects, advocating for a shift toward policies and designs that address the lived realities of resettled communities [2]. This aligns with E. Miller et al., (2024), who argues that planning must recognise the value of cultural backgrounds and social networks, particularly in supporting education outcomes [28].

Restorative schemes also play a pivotal role in planning for displacement. Mayer et al., (2021) and Zhang et al.,

(2022) underscored the need to consider indirect displacement effects, advocating for approaches that integrate restorative practices into resettlement design [24], [25]. Meanwhile, Nel & Mabhena (2021) highlighted how changes in landscapes often "echo" the past, illustrating the interconnectedness of material transformations and evolving livelihoods [26]. Widyaningsih & Van den Broeck (2021) critiqued conventional urban planning mechanisms, emphasising that community-driven initiatives can reshape resettlement processes into transformative opportunities [56]. The importance of negotiation and public participation in improving access to housing, basic urban amenities, and tenure security is also highlighted by Uwayezu & T. de Vries (2020). Together, these studies demonstrate that planning and design must be inclusive, adaptable, and cognizant of the socioeconomic and cultural contexts of resettled populations [23].

The quality of resettlement housing and infrastructure significantly influences the satisfaction and well-being of displaced populations. See & Wilmsen (2020) observed that while some households benefit from improved housing quality, inequalities and power dynamics can exacerbate disparities, leading to uneven outcomes [52]. Policymakers are urged to prioritise justice-oriented approaches to ensure equitable improvements in housing quality. However, Haile (2024) critiqued the widespread prevalence of substandard housing in urban areas, noting that resettlement policies often fail to benefit the poorest residents, inadvertently increasing material inequality [61]. These findings highlight the need for governance frameworks that enforce equitable standards in resettlement housing to prevent further marginalisation.

Infrastructural upgrades are equally critical for enhancing sustainability in resettlement areas. Wang (2023) emphasised that in-situ infrastructure interventions, tailored to the specific needs of the community, can improve satisfaction and sustainability, although outcomes may vary depending on the location and scope of upgrades [53]. Otsuki (2023) explored the social-material effects of compensation provided through infrastructure, including cash, housing, and replacement land [27]. This underscores the dual role of infrastructure as both a material necessity and a means of fostering social inclusion in resettlement areas. The long-term success of resettlement programmes depends on the effective maintenance of urban settlements. Hanapi et al., (2023) suggested that enhancing the quality of low-cost dwellings in Malaysia requires stricter building protocols to ensure durability and safety over time [20]. Similarly, Thiagarajan & Khudrathullah Iqbal (2020) linked maintenance to the design of residential layouts, arguing that better planning can reduce the resource burden on governing authorities while supporting the livelihoods of resettled populations [32]. These insights highlight the need for integrated approaches that balance the immediate demands of resettlement with long-term maintenance considerations, ensuring that urban settlements remain functional, sustainable, and supportive of the populations they serve.

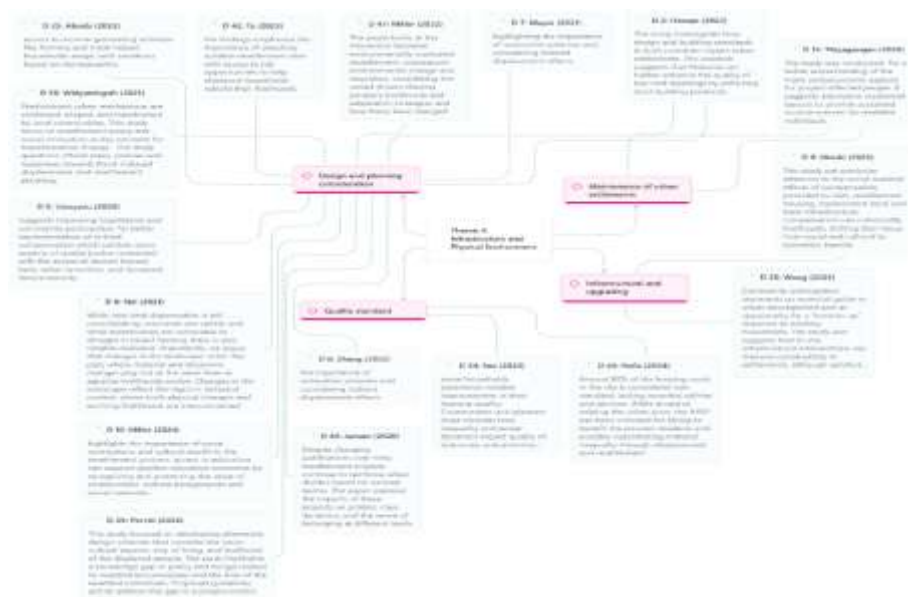


Figure 9. Success factors related to infrastructure and physical environment

Theme 5: Education and long-term support

Education and long-term support are essential to facilitate trust and cooperation among communities and improve social cohesion. Despite its critical importance, education and long-term support remain some of the

least discussed themes in resettlement literature between 2020 and 2024. The limited focus on this theme suggests a gap in understanding the systemic role that education and sustained support play in ensuring the long-term success of resettlement programmes. Chen et al., (2021) highlighted that long-term support schemes can benefit both resettled populations and host communities when designed collaboratively with significant public participation [57]. By incorporating community voices, these support mechanisms can address the specific needs and aspirations of displaced individuals, fostering resilience and social cohesion in resettlement areas. However, the underrepresentation of this theme in current research highlights the need for greater exploration of how sustained interventions impact the socioeconomic and cultural integration of resettled communities.

Access to education, as emphasised by E. Miller et al., (2024), is another key component of long-term support, contributing significantly to the stability and progression of resettled populations [28]. The study underscores that education outcomes improve when resettlement programmes recognise and leverage the cultural backgrounds and social networks of affected communities. By valuing the unique identities and experiences of displaced individuals, education initiatives can facilitate smoother integration and build the human capital necessary for long-term development. However, the lack of detailed research on education in the context of resettlement points to a missed opportunity for understanding its broader implications on community development, intergenerational mobility, and resilience to future displacement.

The minimal discussion on education and long-term support in existing literature suggests its potential for future research. Understanding how to design and implement education programmes that address the needs of displaced communities while fostering collaboration with host communities could offer valuable insights into resettlement planning. Additionally, investigating the intersection of education and long-term support with other themes, such as governance, social dynamics, and infrastructure, could provide a more holistic framework for achieving sustainable resettlement outcomes. As resettlement becomes increasingly relevant in the face of climate change and global displacement, exploring this theme could contribute to more equitable and inclusive solutions.



Figure 10. Success factors related to education and long-term support

DISCUSSION

While the five themes identified in this review which include (1) governance and policy frameworks; (2) community and social dynamics; (3) economic and livelihood considerations; (4) infrastructure and physical environment; and (5) education and long-term support, are presented as analytically distinct, the literature demonstrates that resettlement success rarely emerges from these factors in isolation. Instead, outcomes are shaped through dynamic interactions and mutual dependencies across institutional, social, economic, and spatial domains. Treating these themes as independent categories will oversimplifying the complex processes through which resettled communities adapt, sustain livelihoods, and reconstruct social cohesion over time. Accordingly, this discussion moves beyond thematic description to critically examine how the five themes intersect, reinforce, or at times undermine one another across different resettlement contexts. By engaging with convergent and divergent findings in the literature, the discussion reframes resettlement success as a relational and context-sensitive process, highlighting the conditions under which policies, built environments, and community practices align to produce sustainable outcomes.

Resettlement success is an interdependent system

Across the reviewed literature, the five themes rarely operate independently in practice. Instead, resettlement outcomes emerge from systemic interactions between governance arrangements (Theme 1), community dynamics (Theme 2), livelihood recovery (Theme 3), the physical environment (Theme 4), and long-term support such as education (Theme 5). This matters because many resettlement programmes appear to treat success as the sum of discrete interventions (e.g., deliver houses → provide compensation → relocate households). However, the studies in this review suggest that these inputs can produce contradictory outcomes when the linkages between themes are misaligned. For example, well-intended institutional interventions may provide immediate support (Theme 1), but if they restrict agency or impose norms that weaken social bonding and cultural continuity (Theme 2), the same interventions can reduce adaptation and satisfaction over time. A useful way to interpret resettlement success across contexts is as a relational outcome where policies and built environments create conditions that either enable or constrain livelihood rebuilding and social cohesion, while community responses (trust, participation, place attachment) mediate whether those conditions translate into sustainable well-being.

Governance and policy effectiveness is mediated by trust, participation, and agency

Theme 1 on governance and policy framework were most discussed and repeatedly positions as foundational, especially when policies are timely, people-oriented, and connected to service access and post-resettlement support [42], [57], [62]. Yet Theme 2 however showed that community participation and communication are not merely procedural “add-ons” but mechanisms that shape legitimacy and uptake [23], [40], [48]. In other words, governance capacity alone does not guarantee success. It can fail if it does not produce trust and meaningful involvement. This is where the literature becomes productively divergent. Several studies advocate stronger state support and institutional partnerships [50], [65], while others warn that institutional participation can become overbearing or depoliticise local knowledge [49] and, in disaster recovery contexts, can undermine self-reliance [29]. These findings suggest a central tension in which institutions are necessary for resources and coordination, but institutional dominance can erode community autonomy.

Livelihood recovery and social cohesion form a feedback loop

Theme 2 on community and social dynamic as well as theme 3 on economic and livelihood consideration together indicate that economic stability is not only a material outcome but a social one. Studies on disrupted food security, limited job opportunities, and broken market access show how livelihood loss amplifies vulnerability [55], [63]. Furthermore, literature shows that when people experience instability, isolation, and loss of cultural routines, psychosocial resilience declines [21], which in turn can reduce the capacity to pursue economic recovery. Conversely, stronger social bonding and cultural continuity can enhance coping behaviours and household resilience [44], [66]. The implication is that livelihood restoration should not be treated as a purely economic package (compensation, land, jobs). It is intertwined with:

1. social capital (networks that provide information and mutual aid)
2. place attachment (motivation and satisfaction that shape decisions to invest in the new place)
3. governance legitimacy (trust affecting engagement with programmes)

This helps reconcile why compensation is so contested in Theme 1, which even adequate compensation can fail if it does not restore the capabilities and social conditions needed to rebuild everyday livelihoods [33], and why participatory negotiation processes matter [23], [64].

The built environment redistributes power, identity, and opportunity

Theme 4 on infrastructure and physical environment highlights how planning and infrastructure are often framed as improving liveability and satisfaction, but the broader literature indicates that the built environment can also reproduce inequality and social control. On one hand, improved housing quality and infrastructure upgrades can enhance well-being and satisfaction [52], [53]. On the other hand, the same projects can generate uneven outcomes if they reinforce urban divides or embed restrictive norms [58], or if they fail to serve the poorest [61]. This divergence suggests that better housing condition is not synonymous with better resettlement. Built form interacts with governance and culture, who receives what, where, and under what rules can intensify or reduce

inequities. A second, more subtle interaction appears between Themes 2 and 4 which cultural and social practices require spatial affordances (spaces for religious practice, socialising, livelihood-related activities). Studies emphasising cultural wealth, belonging, and social networks [28], [36], align with planning critiques that resettlement design must reflect lived realities [2]. The divergence is that some planning approaches focus on physical delivery, while social studies show that the success of physical space depends on whether it supports cultural continuity and informal social interaction.

Long-term support as connector across themes

Theme 5 on education and long-term support is particularly valuable because it identifies a clear gap: education and long-term support are under-discussed relative to other themes. Yet the few studies that do address long-term schemes suggest they can function as connector across governance, social integration, and livelihood mobility. Chen et al. (2021) positions long-term support schemes, especially those co-designed with public participation as beneficial to both resettled and host communities, implying a pathway to reduce social tension and build cohesion [57]. E. Miller et al. (2024) further indicates that education outcomes improve when programmes recognise cultural background and social networks, which directly links Theme 5 to Theme 2 (belonging, cultural wealth) and Theme 4 (planning that accommodates social networks and access) [28]. This reveals a critical cross-theme insight where long-term support is not merely a welfare add-on, but it can be a structural mechanism for intergenerational resilience and a bridge between short-term relocation logistics and long-term settlement success.

CONCLUSION

This thematic review has identified the most frequently discussed factors influencing resettlement success in the literature published between 2020 and 2024, highlighting how these factors collectively shape community livelihood adaptation and long-term settlement outcomes in resettlement contexts. The review demonstrates that resettlement success is influenced by five interrelated domains which are (1) governance and policy frameworks, (2) community and social dynamics, (3) economic and livelihood considerations, (4) infrastructure and physical environment, and (5) education and long-term support. Together, these themes reveal that resettlement is not merely a technical or logistical exercise but a deeply social, economic, cultural, and spatial process.

Across the reviewed studies, resettlement programmes that are poorly planned or narrowly implemented tend to exacerbate existing inequalities, disrupt livelihoods, weaken social networks, and erode cultural ties. Conversely, when governance structures are adaptive and participatory, community agency and cultural continuity are supported, and when livelihoods and infrastructure are aligned with long-term development goals, resettlement can create opportunities for resilience and social cohesion. Importantly, the review shows that there is not a single factor determines success in isolation, rather, outcomes emerge from the alignment or even misalignment between institutional interventions, built environments, and community practices. The critical engagement across themes further underscores that resettlement success is context-sensitive and relational. Strong policy frameworks can be undermined by limited community trust, just as improved housing and infrastructure may fail to enhance well-being if they do not support livelihoods or culturally embedded social practices. Economic recovery, social cohesion, and spatial adaptation function as mutually reinforcing processes, while for education and long-term support, despite being underrepresented in recent literature, the theme emerge as critical mechanisms for sustaining intergenerational resilience and integration. The relative neglect of long-term support in the literature highlights a significant gap and suggests the need to move beyond short-term evaluations of resettlement outcomes.

Research Contribution

This study does not only enhance educational knowledge regarding resettlement processes but also offers practical recommendations for enhancing future resettlement initiatives. This review offers a critical foundation for developing theoretical framework that connects resettlement success factors with broader resettlement goals. This review also contributes a more integrated understanding of resettlement success, emphasising that effective resettlement requires coordinated, inclusive, and adaptive approaches that extend beyond immediate relocation. Additionally, it provides an intersectional perspective by linking resettlement with themes such as disaster risk reduction, cultural inclusivity, and social cohesion, offering a more holistic understanding of how displaced

communities adapt to new environments. Future research could explore on how the infrastructure and built environment can influence resettlement success as well as the longitudinal impacts of education and long-term support interventions, especially in diverse, multicultural settings where cultural alignment plays a significant role in resettlement success.

Practical Contribution

From a practical standpoint, this review offers valuable insights for policymakers, designers, and project proponents on mitigating the adverse effects of resettlement. By identifying factors that influence resettlement success such as community participation, inclusive planning, and access to essential resources, this study provides insights on actionable strategies for improving resettlement outcomes. For example, integrating community participation into project planning can address immediate needs while fostering trust and collaboration among stakeholders. Furthermore, benefit-sharing models, which allocate long-term economic gains from resettlement projects to displaced populations, can alleviate socioeconomic disparities and promote equity. These findings reinforce the importance of embedding justice-oriented frameworks into resettlement policies, ensuring that displaced individuals are not only relocated but also supported in rebuilding sustainable livelihoods. These insights ensure that future resettlement projects are more equitable, sustainable, and effective in enhancing the livelihoods of displaced communities. In conclusion, this study offers a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics in resettlement processes and outcomes, providing a foundation for a comprehensive resettlement framework and policy development.

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