Developing a Sustainability Model for Community Enterprises in Eastern Thailand: An Integration of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, Innovation Management, Social Capital

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Abstract

This study investigates the structural relationship and influence pathways among sufficiency economy philosophy, innovation management, social capital, and sustainability of community enterprises in Eastern Thailand. Using a stratified random sampling approach, data were collected through online questionnaires and emails from community enterprise representatives, resulting in 486 valid responses. Structural equation modeling (SEM), integrating confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and path analysis, was employed to examine the proposed relationships. The study reveals that the proposed structural model demonstrates a good fit with the empirical data. Sufficiency economy philosophy exerted significant direct effects on innovation management and social capital and also influenced sustainability both directly and indirectly through these mediating variables. The findings further demonstrate that innovation management and social capital play critical roles in enhancing the sustainability and governance capacity of community enterprises. Moreover, sufficiency economy philosophy, innovation management, and social capital jointly explained 63% of the variance in sustainability, indicating the model's strong predictive power. From a policy and practical perspective, the results provide valuable guidance for policymakers and development agencies in designing community enterprise support programs that integrate sufficiency economy principles with innovation capacity building and social capital strengthening, thereby fostering sustainable regional development in Eastern Thailand.

Keywords: Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, Innovation Management, Social Capital, Regional Development, Community Enterprise Sustainability

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1. Introduction

Community enterprises are increasingly recognized as a key driver of sustainable development, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas where grassroots economic empowerment and citizen participation are essential (Amasiri et al., 2025; Tantra & Pharcharuen, 2025). These enterprises contribute not only to income generation for vulnerable groups but also to poverty alleviation, community strengthening, and the preservation of local culture and natural resources (Katkaew et al., 2024). As locally owned and managed organizations, community enterprises promote collective participation, creativity, and the utilization of local knowledge through participatory governance and collaborative management practices (Watthapron et al., 2024).

In Thailand, community enterprises have been actively promoted as a strategic mechanism for strengthening the grassroots economy, enhancing self-reliance, and fostering long-term local development (Chanyam et al., 2023). Government initiatives have emphasized capacity building through knowledge transfer, managerial skill development, cooperative networking, and improved access to finance and markets. These efforts aim to position community enterprises as sustainable economic entities that align economic activities with social, cultural, and environmental contexts while responding to national sustainable development goals (Simaprasert et al., 2025). This role is particularly significant in the eastern region of Thailand, which possesses strong agricultural and tourism potential and is geographically connected to the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC). Community enterprises in this region play a crucial role in employment creation, income distribution, and local economic resilience (Trade Policy and Strategy Office, Ministry of Commerce, 2023).

Despite their potential, community enterprises in the eastern region continue to face persistent structural challenges that undermine their long-term sustainability. These challenges include limited managerial capability, weak strategic planning, and insufficient organizational systems, which often result in operational discontinuity and an inability to adapt to external environmental changes (Jintana & Puripanik, 2023). Furthermore, restricted access to innovation and technology, stemming from financial constraints, limited technical knowledge, and inadequate institutional support, hinders enterprises from enhancing product value and operational efficiency (Makboriboon & Chantharat, 2024). In addition, deficiencies in social capital, such as weak trust, limited cooperation, and fragmented networks, further constrain collective action and knowledge sharing within communities (Ngamcharoen, 2024). These combined factors significantly impede the capacity of community enterprises to achieve self-reliance and sustained growth (Dhirabhaddo et al., 2024).

Community enterprise sustainability (SUS) extends beyond economic profitability to encompass the ability to maintain social cohesion, adapt to economic, social, and environmental changes, and contribute to the preservation of local resources and cultural identity (Anusonphat & Leenawrat, 2021; Tipyan et al., 2021; Tosuwan, 2024). While prior studies have identified various determinants of sustainability, such as participatory leadership, networking, local wisdom utilization, and capacity development (Boonyarat et al., 2023), the existing literature remains fragmented and largely descriptive. Few studies have developed an integrated analytical framework that systematically explains how economic philosophy, social mechanisms, and innovation management interact to shape community enterprise sustainability, particularly in the context of Thailand's eastern region.

The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) offers a relevant theoretical foundation for addressing this gap. Rooted in the principles of moderation, rationality, and resilience, together with ethical and knowledge-based conditions, SEP provides a holistic development framework applicable at both community and policy levels (Von Feigenblatt et al., 2023; Jeerat et al., 2022). However, despite its normative strength, empirical research that operationalizes SEP and examines its structural relationship with organizational and social mechanisms remains limited. Srichaiwong (2025) highlights the potential of SEP to support sustainable community enterprise development through balanced management practices, member participation, and collaborative learning, yet calls for further empirical validation.

To address this limitation, this study integrates SEP with two complementary perspectives: social capital and innovation management. Social capital defined by trust, networks, and shared norms facilitates cooperation, resource mobilization, and collective problem-solving within community enterprises (Wachiravudho & Phinyarak, 2025). Empirical evidence suggests that strong social capital enhances governance effectiveness, reduces conflict, and strengthens long-term collaboration (Thangthong et al., 2024; Tanintayangkul & Thiangdah, 2025). At the same time, innovation management, encompassing product development, organizational processes, and marketing strategies, enables community enterprises to respond to market dynamics and environmental change (Barisri et al., 2024; Chaunrakthum et al., 2024). Prior studies demonstrate that innovation enhances product differentiation, market expansion, and income generation, particularly through digital platforms and adaptive design (Pimonrattnakan, 2021; Changprachak, 2025; Yaisumlee et al., 2025). Despite growing interest in these factors, existing research rarely examines their interrelationships within a unified structural framework, especially in the context of community enterprises operating near strategic economic zones such as the EEC. This constitutes both a theoretical gap due to the lack of integrative models linking SEP, social capital, and innovation and an empirical gap, as evidence from eastern Thailand remains scarce.

Accordingly, the present study aims to investigate the structural relationships among the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), social capital, innovation management, and the sustainability of community enterprises in Eastern Thailand. By employing structural equation modeling (SEM), this research empirically examines both direct and indirect pathways influencing sustainability outcomes. The study contributes theoretically by operationalizing SEP within an integrated analytical framework and empirically by providing region-specific evidence relevant to community enterprises in the eastern region. Practically, the findings offer actionable insights for policymakers, development agencies, and community leaders seeking to strengthen the sustainability and supply-chain readiness of community enterprises in alignment with regional development and EEC-driven economic transformation.

2. Research Objectives

2.1 To study variables with direct, indirect, and total effects on the sustainability of community enterprises in Eastern Thailand.

2.2 To examine the consistency of the structural relationship model of sufficiency economy philosophy, social capital, innovation management, and sustainability of community enterprises in Eastern Thailand.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Analytical Review of Prior Studies on Community Enterprise Sustainability

Previous studies on community enterprise sustainability have primarily focused on isolated determinants, such as leadership, participation, or local wisdom, often within specific community contexts (Phongphit & Pradit, 2019; Hemnil, 2021). While these studies provide valuable descriptive insights, many lack an integrative analytical framework that simultaneously examines economic philosophy, innovation capability, and social embeddedness. Methodologically, most prior research relies on qualitative case studies or simple regression analysis, which limits causal inference and the ability to explain interrelationships among latent constructs (Aksorntap et al., 2023; Thangthong et al., 2024). This methodological limitation constrains the generalizability of findings and leaves unanswered questions regarding how multiple drivers jointly influence sustainability outcomes. In addition, several development initiatives in the past have failed due to fragmented management, weak innovation adoption, and insufficient social cohesion, resulting in dependency on external support and lack of long-term resilience (Ngamcharoen, 2024; Dhirabhaddo et al., 2024). These failures highlight the inadequacy of single-factor approaches in explaining sustainable community enterprise development.

3.2 Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) as a Strategic Foundation

The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), grounded in moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity underpinned by knowledge and morality, has been widely recognized as a holistic development paradigm (Wanthum et al., 2024). Unlike conventional growth-oriented frameworks, SEP emphasizes risk management, ethical decision-making, and long-term resilience, which are particularly relevant to community enterprises operating under resource constraints. Empirical studies suggest that SEP does not directly generate competitiveness but creates enabling conditions for adaptive management and sustainable value creation, especially when combined with organizational learning and innovation (Prayukvong et al., 2023; Tongdaeng et al., 2024). However, prior studies often treat SEP as an independent driver, without examining its interaction with innovation mechanisms or social structures.

3.3 Innovation Management and Adaptive Capacity

Innovation management refers to the systematic implementation of new ideas in products, processes, organization, and marketing to enhance adaptability and competitiveness (Songsawat et al., 2025). In the context of community enterprises, innovation is typically incremental and rooted in local resources and cultural identity, rather than technology-intensive disruption (Sittisutakorn, 2024; Sangpud et al., 2024). Despite its importance, many community enterprises fail to sustain innovation due to risk aversion, limited strategic planning, and weak institutional support, leading to stagnation and vulnerability to market changes (Kuljittree & Mathuros, 2023). This suggests that innovation effectiveness depends on an underlying philosophical and governance framework, such as SEP, which legitimizes cautious experimentation and long-term thinking.

3.4 Social Capital and Collective Sustainability

Social capital, encompassing trust, shared norms, and social networks, plays a crucial role in mobilizing collective action and resource sharing (Chanthanet, 2022; Suwannasri, 2025). Prior studies consistently show that strong social capital enhances cooperation, reduces transaction costs, and facilitates knowledge exchange, all of which are vital for community enterprise sustainability. However, excessive reliance on social ties without complementary innovation and strategic orientation can also lead to insularity and resistance to change, a limitation rarely discussed in earlier research

(Sangwongdee, 2024). This highlights the need to examine social capital not as a standalone asset, but as a mediating and reinforcing mechanism within a broader sustainability framework.

To provide a systematic synthesis of prior studies on community enterprise sustainability, this study consolidates key literature by comparing research contexts, core variables, methodologies, principal findings, and identified limitations. Rather than reviewing individual studies in isolation, this synthesis highlights overarching patterns and unresolved issues across the literature. Accordingly, Table 1 presents a structured overview of empirical and conceptual studies relevant to sustainability of community enterprises, with particular emphasis on the roles of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), innovation management, and social capital.

Table 1 Synthesis of Prior Studies on Community Enterprise Sustainability

Author(s) / Year	Research Context	Key Variables	Methodology	Key Findings	Limitations / Gaps Identified
Phongphit & Pradit (2019)	Community enterprises in Thailand	SEP, Sustainability	Qualitative case study	SEP enhances self-reliance and balanced development	Lacks quantitative validation and causal analysis
Hemnil (2021)	Rural community enterprises	SEP, Social cohesion	Qualitative	SEP strengthens ethical management and cooperation	Does not examine interaction with innovation
Nakudom et al. (2020)	Local communities	Social capital, Trust	Survey (descriptive)	Social capital improves collaboration	No linkage to sustainability outcomes
Thangthong et al. (2024)	Community enterprises	SEP, Social capital	Survey, regression	SEP promotes trust and participation	Single-equation analysis, ignores mediating effects
Prayukvong et al. (2023)	Community enterprises	SEP, Innovation	Mixed methods	SEP encourages cautious and ethical innovation	Innovation treated as outcome, not mechanism
Tongdaeng et al. (2024)	Craft-based community enterprises	SEP, Product innovation	Case study	SEP supports eco-friendly innovation	Context-specific, limited generalizability
Sangpud et al. (2024)	Community enterprises	Innovation management	Quantitative	Innovation increases competitiveness	Does not consider philosophical or social foundations
Kuljittree & Mathuros (2023)	SMEs & community firms	Innovation, Performance	Regression analysis	Innovation improves efficiency	Sustainability not explicitly examined
Chanthanet (2022)	Local organizations	Social capital	Conceptual	Social capital reduces transaction costs	Lacks empirical testing
Sangwongdee (2024)	Community networks	Social networks, Sustainability	Qualitative	Networks support market access	Overembeddedness and rigidity not discussed

Based on the synthesis presented in Table 1, three critical gaps can be identified. First, prior studies predominantly examine Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, innovation management, and social capital as independent factors, with limited attention to their interdependencies within a unified analytical framework. Second, most empirical investigations rely on qualitative approaches or simple regression models, which constrain causal inference and fail to capture complex structural relationships among latent constructs. Third, despite recurring evidence of development failures caused by fragmented management, weak innovation capability, and insufficient social cohesion, no study has empirically tested an integrated model that explains how these dimensions jointly influence sustainability outcomes of community enterprises. These gaps underscore the need for a

comprehensive, theory-informed, and methodologically robust framework, which the present study addresses by proposing and testing an integrated structural model using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Research Model

Based on the study of the structural relationships among the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, innovation management, social capital, and the sustainability of community enterprises, the researcher was able to determine the relationships among the key variables, which were then used to develop the research conceptual framework as illustrated in Figure 1.

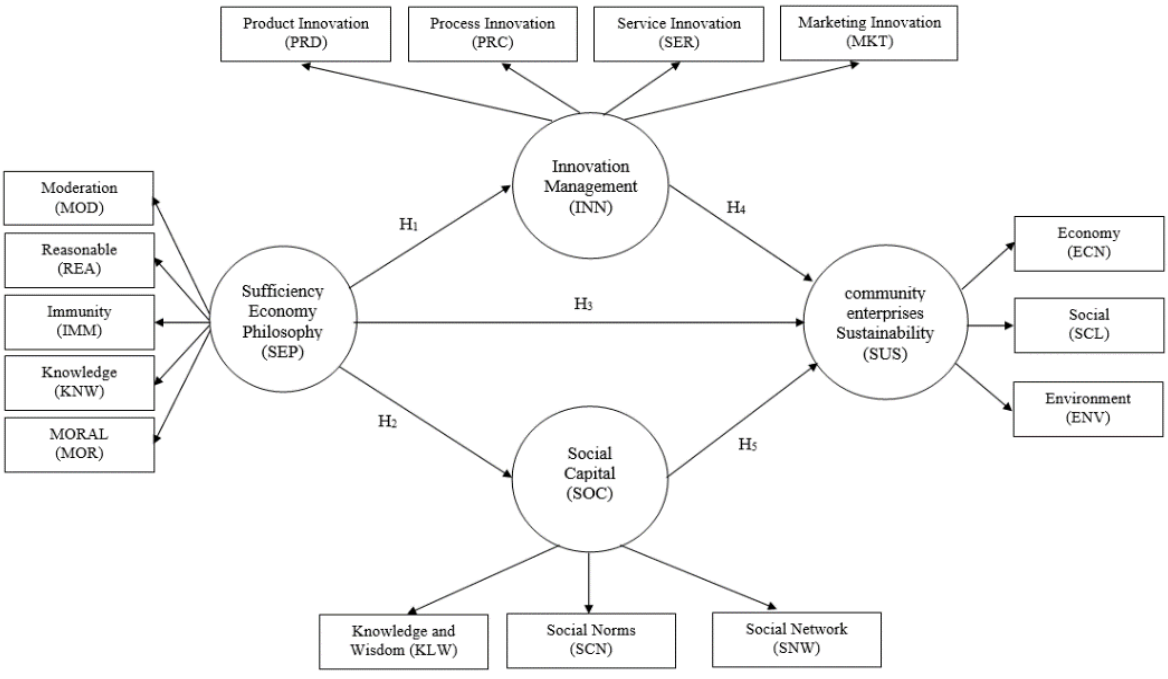


Figure 1 Research Model

Sufficiency Economy Philosophy and Innovation Management

Although SEP does not directly promote aggressive growth, it creates enabling conditions for cautious, ethical, and context-sensitive innovation. Previous studies suggest that SEP supports innovation by encouraging risk awareness, long-term thinking, and responsible experimentation within community enterprises (Prayukvong et al., 2023; Tongdaeng et al., 2024). Therefore, SEP is expected to positively influence innovation management capabilities.

H_1: The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy has a direct influence on innovation management.

Sufficiency Economy Philosophy and Social Capital

SEP promotes ethical conduct, mutual trust, and balanced social relationships, which are fundamental to the development of social capital. Prior research demonstrates that organizations guided by SEP principles tend to foster cooperation, transparency, and trust-based networks within communities (Hemnil, 2021; Thangthong et al., 2024). Thus, SEP is expected to strengthen social capital in community enterprises.

H_2: The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy has a direct influence on social capital.

Sufficiency Economy Philosophy and Sustainability

The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy emphasizes moderation, rational decision-making, and resilience grounded in ethical considerations. Prior empirical studies indicate that SEP enhances economic stability, prudent resource utilization, and long-term adaptability of community enterprises (Phongphit & Pradit, 2019; Thangthong et al., 2024). These characteristics are widely recognized as core elements of organizational sustainability. Accordingly, SEP is expected to exert a direct influence on the sustainability of community enterprises.

H_3: The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy has a direct influence on the sustainability of community enterprises.

Innovation Management and Sustainability

Innovation management enhances adaptability, competitiveness, and value creation through improvements in products, processes, and marketing practices. Empirical evidence shows that innovation enables community enterprises to respond effectively to market changes, improve efficiency, and strengthen economic and social sustainability (Sangpud et al., 2024; Kuljittree & Mathuros, 2023). Consequently, innovation management is expected to directly contribute to sustainability outcomes.

H_4: Innovation management has a direct influence on the sustainability of community enterprises.

Social Capital and Sustainability

Social capital facilitates collaboration, knowledge sharing, and collective problem-solving, which are essential for sustainable community enterprise development. Studies indicate that strong social networks and shared norms enhance access to resources, reduce transaction costs, and support long-term economic and social sustainability (Chanthanet, 2022; Sangwongdee, 2024). Therefore, social capital is expected to positively influence sustainability.

H5: Social capital has a direct influence on the sustainability of community enterprises.

4. Research Methodology

This research is a quantitative study conducted in the form of a survey research. It aims to explore and understand the relationships among four main constructs 1) Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) consisting of five observed variables: Moderation (MOD), Reasonableness (REA), Immunity (IMM), Knowledge (KNW), and Morality (MOR) 2) Innovation Management (INN) comprising four observed variables: Product Innovation (PRD), Process Innovation (PRC), Service Innovation (SER), and Marketing Innovation (MKT) 3) Social Capital (SOC) including three observed variables: Knowledge and Wisdom (KLW), Social Norms (SCN), and Social Network (SNW) and 4) Community Enterprises Sustainability (SUS) consisting of three observed variables: Economic (ECN), Social (SCL), and Environmental (ENV). Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed as the primary analytical technique because the proposed research framework involves multiple latent variables measured by several observed indicators and aims to examine both direct and indirect relationships simultaneously. SEM is appropriate for this study as it allows for the assessment of measurement validity, structural relationships, and overall model fit within a single comprehensive model.

Population and Samples

The population used in this study was the Eastern Community Enterprise Region 2 entrepreneurs, who were from the provinces of Chanthaburi, Trat, Nakhon Nayok, Prachin Buri, and Sa Kaeo, divided into 497, 196, 241, 373, and 545, respectively, for a total of 1,852 entrepreneurs and 29,254 members. Data from March 31, 2025 (Department of Agricultural Extension, 2025). In

this investigation, the sample size was determined using the rule of thumb suggested by Comrey (1973), which proposes using 10-20 samples per observed variable (Schumacker and Lomax, 2010; Hair et al., 1998). Kline (2010) goes on to say that structural equation modeling requires at least 200 samples. With 13 observed variables in the study, the researcher used a 20-sample ratio per variable, resulting in a total sample size of 260. However, during the data collection process, a total of 486 questionnaires were returned. After data screening and verification procedures, 400 questionnaires were found to be complete and valid for analysis. Therefore, the final sample size used in SEM analysis was 400 respondents. This sample size exceeds the minimum requirement for SEM and enhances the statistical power and stability of parameter estimates.

A stratified random sample approach based on proportional representation of each province was used first, followed by basic random sampling via lottery. As shown in Table 2

Table 2 Number of community enterprises, members and samples of the provincial areas

Province	Number of community enterprises	Number of members	Number of samples
Chanthaburi	497	8,135	72
Trat	196	2,508	23
Nakhon Nayok,	241	4,083	36
Prachin Buri	373	5,420	48
Sa Kaeo	545	9,108	81
Total	1,852	29,254	260

Source: Department of Agricultural Extension (2025)

Table 2 presents the initial proportional allocation of the planned sample size (n = 260) derived from the stratified random sampling design. Although the planned sample size was 260, a total of 486 questionnaires were returned, of which 400 were valid after data screening.

Research Instrument

The research instrument was a questionnaire based on a review of ideas, concepts, and relevant research. The questionnaire was broken into five parts. Part 1: General information on the respondents, including Gender, Age, Education Level, Years of Experience in Community Enterprise Management, Position in the Community Enterprise, Type of Community Enterprise, Number of Members in the Enterprise, Annual Income of the Enterprise, Province of the Community Enterprise. Parts 2-5: A questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale for their comments. Part 2 asked for opinions on the sufficiency economy philosophy and developed questions from Pongsapang's (2018) research; Part 3 asked for opinions on innovation management and developed questions from Phuengpa's (2020) research; Part 4 asked for opinions on social capital and developed questions from Pongsapang's (2018)research; and Part 5 asked for opinions on the sustainability of community enterprises and developed questions from Chaetnalao (2019). Content validity was checked by sending the questionnaire to three experts to ensure the accuracy of the content and appropriateness of the language used, as well as to examine the consistency of the expert questions. It was found to have values ranging from 0.67-1.00, which is greater than 0.50 (Kanchanawasi, 2002). The questionnaire's reliability was tested using a sample group with characteristics similar to the target group, for a total of 30 sets. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was then used to assess the reliability value. The overall version had a value of 0.94, which is greater than 0.70 and indicates that the measurement tool has an adequate level of dependability (Phetcharot & Chamniprasat, 2002).

Collection of Data

Data were collected through postal mail and online platforms. Prior to data collection, respondents were contacted by telephone to request participation consent. Questionnaires were distributed via electronic mail and online survey platforms. All returned questionnaires underwent an initial data verification process, including completeness checks, response consistency, and screening for duplicate submissions from online and email sources. The data collection period lasted three months. Of the 486 returned questionnaires, 400 were retained after excluding incomplete responses, inconsistent answer patterns, and responses exhibiting straight-lining behavior.

Data Screening and Missing Data Management

Before conducting the SEM analysis, data screening procedures were performed. These included 1) Examination of missing data, where cases with excessive missing values were removed, and remaining missing values were handled using mean substitution due to their low proportion, 2) Detection of outliers using standardized scores and Mahalanobis distance, and 3) Assessment of response patterns to identify inattentive responses such as straight-lining. Only data that passed all screening criteria were included in the final analysis (n = 400).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. SEM analysis was performed using SPSS & AMOS software. The analysis followed a two-step approach consisting of 1) measurement model assessment through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate construct validity and reliability; and 2) structural model analysis to test the hypothesized relationships among latent variables. The model fit criteria, based on Schumacker & Lomax (2010), are as follows: 1) The p-value must be greater than 0.05, 2) The chi-square/degree of freedom ratio (CMIN/df) must be less than 3, 3) The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) should be greater than 0.95, 4) The Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) should be greater than 0.95, 5) The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) must be less than 0.05, and 6) The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) must be less than 0.05.

5. Research Results

This study involved 486 respondents representing community enterprises. Most of the respondents were female (63.8%), aged between 31-40 years (49.2%), completed secondary education (46.3%), and had 3–5 years of experience in managing or participating in community enterprises (267 people or 54.9%). Regarding their roles, most were general members (59.1%). Regarding the type of community enterprise, most were engaged in agricultural processing (48.6%). Most enterprises had between 1–10 members (62.6%), with an annual income between 100,000–500,000 baht (82.7%). The largest portion of the respondents was located in Eastern Region 2 (42.7%). The key variables used in this study included Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, Innovation management, Social Capital, and the Sustainability of Community Enterprises. Descriptive statistics of these variables are presented as follows.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, Innovation Management, Social Capital, Sustainability of Community Enterprises

Variables	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	Standard Deviation (S.D.)	Descrip-tion	Skew ness	kurtosis	VIF	Tolerance
Sufficiency Economy Philosophy	3.94	0.47	High	0.14	0.56	0.52	1.92
Innovation Management	4.08	0.47	High	0.18	0.34	0.48	2.10
Social Capital	3.82	0.57	High	0.31	0.61	0.52	1.93
Sustainability of CE	3.84	0.51	High	0.23	0.89	-	-

According to Table 2, respondents reported a high level of agreement across all factors. Innovation management received the highest mean score ($\overline{X}$ = 4.08, S.D. = 0.47), followed by sufficiency economy philosophy ($\overline{X}$ = 3.94, S.D. = 0.47), sustainability of community enterprises ($\overline{X}$ = 3.84, S.D. = 0.51), and social capital ($\overline{X}$ = 3.82, S.D. = 0.57), respectively. The preliminary data analysis for structural equation modeling revealed that 1) skewness values ranged from 0.14 to 0.31, indicating symmetrical distributions. Kurtosis values ranged from 0.34 to 0.89, which represent excess kurtosis values close to zero. This suggests that the distributions are slightly platykurtic and reasonably approximate normality. According to Curran, West, and Finch (1996), excess kurtosis values within ± 2 are acceptable for SEM analysis, confirming the suitability of the data for further multivariate analysis. 2) Multicollinearity among the independent variables was assessed using VIF and tolerance values. The VIF values ranged from 0.48 to 0.52, which are well below the commonly accepted threshold of 10 (Belsley, 1991), while the tolerance values ranged from 1.92 to 2.10, exceeding the minimum acceptable value of 0.10 (Foxall & Yani-de-Soriano, 2005), indicating that multicollinearity is not a concern in this dataset.

Before conducting structural equation modeling (SEM), the appropriateness of the data was assessed. A total of 15 variables were identified, resulting in 105 pairs of correlations. All correlation coefficients were below 0.80, indicating moderate inter-variable correlations. This implies the absence of multicollinearity and confirms that the observed variables appropriately loaded onto their respective constructs, supporting their suitability for SEM (Byrne, 2010). Further supporting this, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded a statistically significant result (χ^2= 8816.58, df = 105, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the correlation matrix differs significantly from an identity matrix. This demonstrates that the observed variables are adequately interrelated to justify the use of factor analysis. In addition, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.91, exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of 0.80 (Kim & Mueller, 1978), and further confirming that the data are suitable for factor analysis. The results of the data appropriateness assessment are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Results of Data Suitability Testing Using Pearson Correlation Analysis Among Observed Variables

Factors	MOD	REA	IMM	KNW	MOR	PRD	PRC	SER	MKT	KNW	SCN	SNW	ECN	SCL	ENV
MOD	1.00														
REA	0.45**	1.00													
IMM	0.53**	0.59**	1.00												
KNW	0.47**	0.34**	0.48**	1.00											
MOR	0.45**	0.51**	0.42**	0.71**	1.00										
PRD	0.53**	0.57**	0.49**	0.72**	0.76**	1.00									
PRC	0.57**	0.53**	0.44**	0.72**	0.72**	0.77**	1.00								
SER	0.55**	0.63**	0.46**	0.65**	0.79**	0.74**	0.79**	1.00							
MKT	0.57**	0.58**	0.47**	0.69**	0.77**	0.74**	0.75**	0.79**	1.00						
KNW	0.56**	0.55**	0.44**	0.66**	0.74**	0.79**	0.78**	0.71**	0.70**	1.00					
SCN	0.50**	0.61**	0.48**	0.56**	0.70**	0.77**	0.73**	0.72**	0.78**	0.75**	1.00				
SNW	0.58**	0.60**	0.48**	0.69**	0.74**	0.73**	0.73**	0.77**	0.68**	0.63**	0.73**	1.00			
ECN	0.52**	0.55**	0.47**	0.72**	0.75**	0.78**	0.72**	0.75**	0.76**	0.68**	0.62**	0.82**	1.00		
SCL	0.68**	0.49**	0.65**	0.36**	0.31**	0.33**	0.43**	0.26**	0.23**	0.25**	0.27**	0.26**	0.28**	1.00	
ENV	0.51**	0.29**	0.42**	0.72**	0.61**	0.58**	0.60**	0.54**	0.57**	0.57**	0.48**	0.57**	0.64**	0.32**	1.00
Means	3.91	3.95	3.95	3.91	3.98	4.04	4.08	4.09	4.10	3.81	3.77	3.89	3.91	3.83	3.79
S.D.	0.45	0.59	0.59	0.51	0.59	0.57	0.61	0.44	0.59	0.63	0.65	0.63	0.70	0.63	0.39

Note: **Comeltion is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) = 0.91, Bartlett's test of sphericity = 8816.58, df = 105, sig = 0.00

Analysis of the measurement model

Figure 2 presents the results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the measurement model, which was designed to examine the structural relationships among the observed variables, or questionnaire items, under each latent construct. These constructs were derived from a literature review and include Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), Innovation Management (INN), Social Capital (SOC), and Community Enterprises Sustainability (SUS). The analysis revealed that the measurement model fits the empirical data well, with the following goodness-of-fit indices: χ^2/df = 1.37, p = 0.08, GFI = 0.99, AGFI = 0.96, CFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.03, and RMR = 0.00. All fit indices are within acceptable thresholds, indicating that the measurement model is well-aligned with the observed data. Therefore, it can be concluded that the model demonstrates construct validity based on statistical criteria. The detailed statistical results related to validity and construct reliability are shown in Table 4.

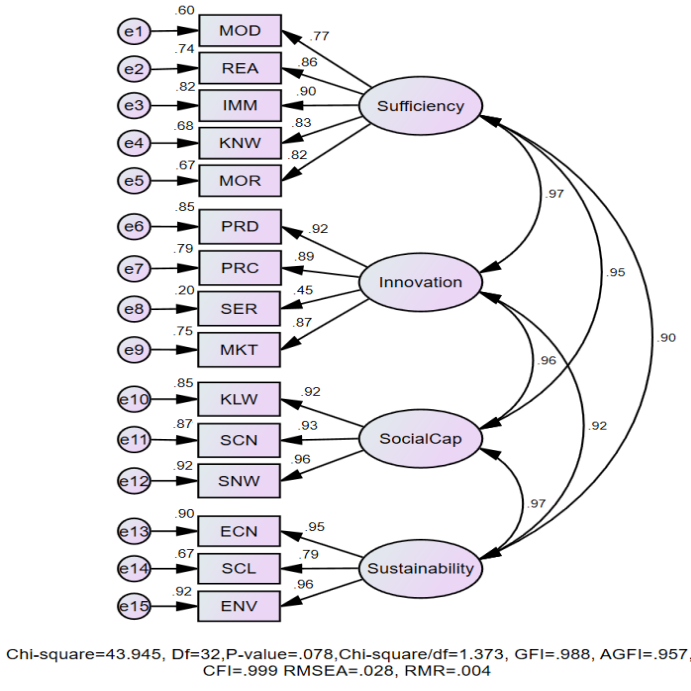


Figure 2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Table 4 Structural Reliability of the Measurement Model

Latent Variables	Construct	Factor Loading	t-Value	Sig	R^2	CR	AVE	Conbach's Alpha
SEP						0.92	0.70	0.87
	MOD	0.77	-	0.00**	0.60			
	REA	0.86	12.22	0.00**	0.74			
	IMM	0.90	12.04	0.00**	0.82			
	KNW	0.83	14.27	0.00**	0.68			
	MOR	0.82	14.37	0.00**	0.67			
INN						0.87	0.65	0.85
	PRD	0.92	-	0.00**	0.85			
	PRC	0.89	37.72	0.00**	0.79			
	SER	0.45	35.30	0.00**	0.20			
	MKT	0.87	33.90	0.00**	0.75			
SOC						0.96	0.88	0.83
	KLW	0.92	-	0.00**	0.85			
	SCN	0.93	32.33	0.00**	0.87			
	SNW	0.96	38.53	0.00**	0.92			
SUS						0.93	0.82	0.83
	ECN	0.95	-	0.00**	0.90			
	SCL	0.79	16.80	0.00**	0.67			
	ENV	0.96	17.34	0.00**	0.92			

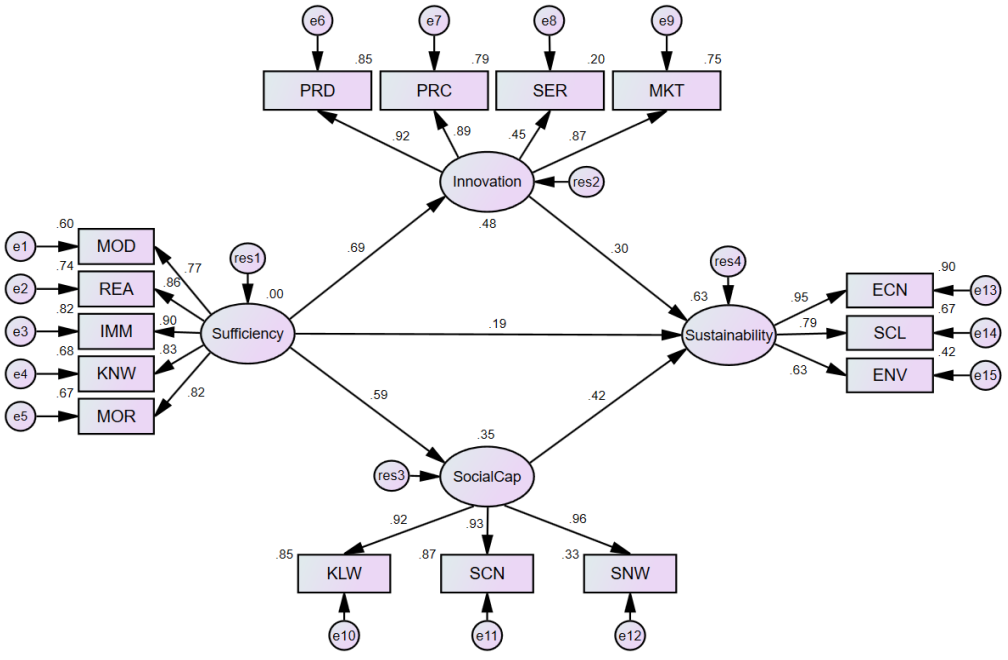
Convergent Validity is tested by examining the factor loadings of the items within each construct. If each indicator's factor loadings (λ) are statistically significant at the 0.05 level, with a t-value larger than 1.96, this shows that the factor loading (λ) differs from 0. As a result, we can conclude that the measurement model has strong convergent validity.

The analysis of structural reliability (Composite Reliability or Construct Reliability: CR) found that the CR values for the variables were as follows: SEP = 0.92, INN = 0.87, SOC = 0.96, and SUS = 0.93. All values above 0.7, indicating that the model has high structural reliability (Carmines & Zeller, 1980). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were: SEP = 0.70, INN = 0.65, SOC = 0.88, and SUS = 0.82, all of which were greater than 0.5, indicating that the model accurately measures the variance of the variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The measurement model has strong structural reliability, as evidenced by R^2 values greater than 0.3 for all construct items and factor loadings greater than 0.6 (Hooper et al., 2008; Hair et al., 2014).

Although most observed variables demonstrated factor loadings exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.60, the service innovation (SER) indicator exhibited a comparatively lower loading (λ = 0.45). This result may reflect the contextual characteristics of community enterprises in Eastern Region 2, where innovation activities are predominantly focused on product and process improvements rather than service-based innovation. Given the informal structure and limited service diversification of many community enterprises, service innovation may not be as salient or consistently perceived among respondents. Nevertheless, the indicator was retained in the model due to its theoretical relevance and statistically significant contribution to the latent construct of innovation management (t-value > 1.96), consistent with prior SEM practices in applied community-based research.

Structural Model Analysis

Figure 3 shows that the structural relationship model is consistent with the empirical data, as indicated by the fit indices: χ^2/df = 1.27, p = 0.08, GFI = 0.98, AGFI = 0.96, CFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.02, and RMR = 0.01. These values meet the recommended statistical criteria. It can be concluded that the variables within the structural model, Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), Innovation Management (INN), Social Capital (SOC), and Community Enterprise Sustainability (SUS) are well-aligned and integrated, indicating that the measurement model demonstrates validity.



Chi-square=69.937, Df=55,P-value=.085,Chi-square/df=1.272, GFI=.981, AGFI=.960, CFI=.998 RMSEA=.024, RMR=.009

The results of the study of the structural relationship model of sufficiency economy philosophy, social capital, innovation management, and sustainability of community enterprises in Eastern Thailand are shown in Table 5

Table 5 Analysis of Causal Variables of Sustainability Model for Community Enterprises in Eastern Thailand

Causal factors	Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP)			Innovation Management (INN)			Social Capital (SOC)		
Effect factors	TE	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE
Innovation Management (INN)	0.69	0.69	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Capital (SOC)	0.59	0.59	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sustainability of CE (SUS)	0.64	0.19	0.45	0.30	0.30	-	0.42	0.42	-
Statistics									
χ^2 = 69.94, df = 55, χ^2/df = 1.27, p-value = 0.85, GFI = 0.98, AGFI = 0.96, RMR = 0.01, RMSEA = 0.02									
Casual Factors	MOD	REA	IMM	KNW	MOR	PRD	PRC	SER	MKT
Factor Loading	0.77	0.86	0.90	0.83	0.82	0.92	0.89	0.45	0.87
	KLW	SCN	SNW						
	0.92	0.93	0.96						

Causal factors	Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP)			Innovation Management (INN)	Social Capital (SOC)
Effect Factors	ECN	SCL	ENV		
Factor Loading	0.95	0.79	0.63		
Structural Equation of Variables		INN	SOC	SUS	
R-Square		0.48	0.35	0.63	
Correlation Matrix between Latent Variables					
Latent Variables		SEP	INN	SOC	SUS
SEP		1.00			
INN		0.69	1.00		
SOC		0.59	0.66	1.00	
SUS		0.64	0.72	0.70	1.00

Note: $p < 0.01$

The results of the structural equation model (SEM) analysis, which examined the causative factors influencing the effectiveness of community enterprise management in Eastern Region 2, found that the model was compatible with empirical data. The model fit to the hypothesis yielded a chi-square/df (χ^2/df) value of 1.27 (69.94/55), meeting the recommended criterion of less than 2 (Bollen, 1989). Furthermore, the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) and Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) were 0.98 and 0.96, respectively, which are close to one and above the recommended value of 0.95 at the 99% confidence level (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000). The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was 0.02, and the Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) was 0.01, both lower than the recommended threshold of 0.05 (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000). These findings suggest that the proposed research model is aligned with the empirical data. The explanatory power of the structural model is substantial, as indicated by the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.63$) for sustainability. This suggests that SEP, innovation management, and social capital collectively explain 63% of the variance in community enterprise sustainability, reflecting a strong effect size and highlighting the robustness of the proposed integrated framework. Notably, the results indicate that while the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy has a direct effect on sustainability ($\beta = 0.19$), its indirect effects through innovation management and social capital are substantially stronger (IE = 0.45). This finding suggests that SEP alone may be insufficient to achieve sustainable outcomes unless it is operationalized through innovation practices and reinforced by strong social capital.

The results of the path analysis provide support for all proposed hypotheses. **Hypothesis 1 (H1)** suggested that the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) would have a direct effect on Innovation Management (INN). The analysis yielded a significant path coefficient of 0.69, with an R^2 value of 0.48, indicating that SEP explained 48% of the variance in INN. This finding supports H1 and underscores the vital role of SEP in promoting innovation within community enterprises. **Hypothesis 2 (H2)** proposed that SEP would have a direct influence on Social Capital (SOC). The results revealed a path coefficient of 0.59 and an R^2 value of 0.35, suggesting that SEP accounted for 35% of the variance in SOC. These results confirm H2 and imply that SEP fosters trust, collaboration, and strong social networks within communities. **Hypothesis 3 (H3)** examined both the direct and indirect effects of SEP on the Sustainability of Community

Enterprises (SUS). SEP demonstrated a direct influence of 0.19 and an indirect influence of 0.45 through INN and SOC, resulting in a total effect of 0.64. These findings provide strong support for H3, indicating that SEP contributes to sustainability both directly and through key mediating factors. **Hypothesis 4 (H4)** posited that INN would have a direct impact on SUS. The analysis confirmed this with a path coefficient of 0.30, reinforcing the importance of innovation in enhancing the long-term sustainability of community enterprises. **Hypothesis 5 (H5)** proposed that SOC would directly influence SUS. The results supported this hypothesis, with a path coefficient of 0.42, highlighting the critical role of social capital in sustaining and empowering community-based enterprises. Collectively, SEP, INN, and SOC accounted for 63% of the variance in SUS ($R^2 = 0.63$), affirming the model's strong explanatory power and empirical relevance. The results of the research hypothesis testing can be summarized as in Table 6.

Table 6 Summary of Research Hypothesis Test Result

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Test Results	
	Relation	Test Results
H1: The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy has a direct influence on innovation management.	0.69	Supported
H2: The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy has a direct influence on social capital.	0.59	Supported
H3: The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy has a direct influence on the sustainability of community enterprises.	0.19	Supported
H4 Innovation management has a direct influence on the sustainability of community enterprises.	0.30	Supported
H5: Social capital has a direct influence on the sustainability of community enterprises.	0.42	Supported

6. Discussion

The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) has a direct impact on Innovation Management (INN), highlighting SEP's importance as a conceptual framework for promoting the growth of community enterprise concepts and operations in the innovation dimension. SEP enables communities to make rational strategic decisions with limited resources, emphasizing moderation, rationality, and resilience, all of which are important characteristics of community-based innovation management (Pratumsuwan et al., 2023; Chimplee et al., 2022; Chukong et al., 2024). This finding is consistent with prior studies that conceptualized SEP as a driver of adaptive and context-sensitive innovation; however, unlike earlier qualitative or case-based studies, the present research empirically confirms this relationship using SEM, thereby strengthening the causal interpretation of SEP's role in innovation management

SEP's promotion of innovative thinking does not mean focusing solely on advanced technologies, but also on developing new ways to maximize the use of local resources, adapting production models, and creating added value from community wisdom, all based on an understanding of oneself and the local context (Chanusit et al., 2024; Wingwon et al., 2022). Furthermore, SEP encourages thoughtful and methodical decision-making, lowering the risk of abrupt changes or over-reliance on external factors, resulting in sustainable innovation management in community enterprises that may be used in their local contexts (Boonpeng & Photibat, 2023). Accordingly, this study extends existing literature by demonstrating that SEP can be operationalized as a measurable antecedent of innovation management, rather than remaining solely a normative or philosophical guideline. In conclusion, SEP is both a philosophical concept and a practical tool for promoting innovation

in community companies, with its strengths being its adaptability to community restrictions and potential, resulting in development that is acceptable, sustainable, and consistent with local identity.

The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) has a direct impact on social capital (SOC), demonstrating that SEP is more than just a framework for ethical economic management; it is also a critical conceptual foundation for fostering the development of knowledge, local wisdom, and shared community values, while previous studies emphasized the moral or cultural role of SEP in strengthening community cohesion, the present findings empirically validate SEP's structural influence on multiple dimensions of social capital, including knowledge and wisdom, social norms, and social networks, all of which serve as the foundation for various dimensions of social capital. In terms of Knowledge and Wisdom, SEP encourages learning through hands-on experience, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and the use of local wisdom to solve challenges in community-appropriate ways. This process allows for the continued accumulation and transmission of knowledge capital at the community level (Khatasombun, 2022). In the Social Norms dimension, SEP emphasizes living a rational, moderate, and resilient life, which are principles that influence the determination of social norms that promote unity, shared responsibility, and fairness, particularly building trust and adhering to shared values, which are at the heart of societal living (Khamsuwan et al., 2022).

These rules enable community members to reach decisions based on mutual understanding and respect (Dhammasaccakarn, 2022). For the Social Network dimension, the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy encourages the development of groups such as professional groups, community welfare groups, or public activities that enable community members to successfully interact, exchange, and collaborate (Klaythanee et al., 2024). Compared with earlier descriptive studies, this research provides quantitative evidence that SEP systematically integrates these elements into a coherent social capital structure that supports long-term community enterprise development. These social networks not only serve as channels for exchanging resources and information, but they also aid in the development of trust, involvement, and the flexible and powerful management of problems or crises. In summary, SEP serves as an integrated conceptual framework that connects the elements of social capital in a consistent manner, assisting in the strengthening of communities through knowledge development, instilling desirable values, and building long-term networks, all of which are critical foundations for balanced and stable development.

The findings, which examined the direct and indirect effects of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy on Community Enterprise Sustainability, emphasize SEP's function as a systemic concept that allows for significant reform across numerous aspects of community activity. SEP directly contributes to sustainability by upholding its key principles of moderation, rationality, and resilience. More importantly, the indirect effects mediated through innovation management and social capital indicate that sustainability outcomes are strengthened when SEP is translated into concrete managerial and social practices Furthermore, it has an indirect impact by encouraging internal innovation and social capital, which are essential mediating variables that push community organizations to adapt and expand sustainably. The SEP approach enables community enterprises to develop production processes, management, and marketing with a local value-based perspective and efficient resource utilization, fostering innovative thinking in the face of constraints such as capital or technology (Sangnin et al., 2021; Makboriboon & Chantharat, 2024), yet differs by explicitly modeling innovation and social capital as mediating mechanisms, thereby clarifying the pathways through which SEP contributes to economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

Simultaneously, SEP contributes to the development of a social connection system that facilitates group operations such as resource sharing, collaborative planning, and mutual dependence (Pounpunwong, 2023). This study demonstrates that SEP is more than simply a policy or individual concept; it can also be utilized at the local organizational level to enhance economic, social, and environmental sustainability. In particular, when combined with intermediary factors such as innovation and social capital, it will increase community enterprises' ability to adapt to changes and create a self-sufficient development system in the long run (Nopchalermroj, 2024; Sangkanjanavanich & Suwanbundit, 2024). In conclusion, the fact that SEP has both direct and indirect effects on the sustainability of community enterprises reinforces the integrated idea that sustainable development cannot occur by focusing solely on economic indicators, but must also strengthen ethical foundations, innovation, and social structures in a balanced way.

Innovation Management has a direct impact on the sustainability of community enterprises, demonstrating the importance of innovation as a driving force for ongoing and steady development at the community level. Consistent with prior studies emphasizing product and process innovation, the present findings further demonstrate that innovation management contributes to sustainability by enhancing adaptability, reducing dependency on external resources, and improving risk management capacity at the community level. Innovation management entails not only developing new products or services but also improving processes, managing resources, and increasing competitiveness using local identity and resources (Talumphai et al., 2024; Moonnanut et al., 2024). Community enterprises' creative thinking and proper adaptation capabilities contribute to their ability to cope with economic, social, and environmental changes, reduce external dependency, and improve risk management consistently (Saengkeaw et al., 2025). Furthermore, effective innovation management increases the value of products and services through creative development, particularly in OTOP products and community-based tourism, both of which are critical strategies for achieving economic and social sustainability at the grassroots level (Charoenkasikorn et al., 2024). In conclusion, the research findings clearly show that innovation management is a key factor in the sustainability of community companies. Developing innovations that are suited for the community context will help to promote flexibility, adaptation, and long-term survival in a balanced manner in terms of income, quality of life, and local resource conservation.

Social capital has a direct effect on the sustainability of community companies, highlighting the importance of social structures and characteristics in encouraging long-term growth at the grassroots level. While previous research highlighted social capital as a supportive background condition, the current study empirically positions social capital as a direct predictor of sustainability outcomes. In this context, social capital refers to trust, collaboration, and social networks, all of which are important in enabling community-level economic activities, particularly decision-making, resource sharing, and knowledge transfer (Kongkaew, 2024; Hokkhunthod & Saeoung, 2023). Strong social capital promotes participatory management, listening to community members' voices, and shared development goals. This allows community enterprises to effectively adapt to change and achieve long-term stability (Chuennirun et al., 2024; Chinnasri, 2025).

In practice, social capital reduces operating costs by facilitating resource sharing, co-production, and mutual support systems, resulting in low-cost yet sustainable economic operations (Saewang, 2020). Furthermore, social capital strengthens other types of capital, such as human and cultural capital, resulting in a synergistic force

that drives local economic revival, particularly during crises or after abrupt economic or environmental changes (Totumand & Dokduang, 2022).

Conclusion

This study investigated the structural relationships between the sufficiency economy philosophy, innovation management, social capital, and the sustainability of community enterprises in Eastern Thailand. The results confirmed that sufficiency economy philosophy significantly influences both innovation management and social capital, and has a substantial impact, both directly and indirectly, on enterprise sustainability. Furthermore, both innovation management and social capital directly contributed to enhancing the sustainability of community enterprises. With 63% of the variance in sustainability explained by the model, the findings demonstrate strong explanatory power and validate the robustness of the integrated structural framework. Most notably, the study contributes to the literature by transforming SEP from an abstract philosophical concept into empirically measurable constructs that interact systematically with innovation and social capital, thereby offering a practical and theoretically grounded model for sustainable community enterprise development

Suggestions

Theoretical Contributions

This study advances the literature on community enterprise sustainability by integrating Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), Innovation Management, and Social Capital into a unified structural equation model tested in the context of Eastern Thailand. The findings confirm that innovation management and social capital significantly enhance sustainability, aligning with prior research while extending the applicability of SEP as a guiding framework for community-based enterprises. Futhermore, the model offers a novel conceptual linkage between SEP and innovation practices, demonstrating how cultural and philosophical principles can directly influence modern enterprise management strategies. This integration fills a research gap where previous studies rarely examined these constructs simultaneously within the same analytical framework in the Thai provincial context.

Practical Contributions

For policymakers, the validated model can be used to design province-level development programs that integrate SEP-based decision-making with innovation training and social capital strengthening, particularly through cooperative networks and knowledge-sharing platforms. For community enterprise managers, the findings suggest translating SEP principles into operational guidelines, such as adopting sufficiency-based resource planning, incremental product innovation, and participatory management structures. These practices can be incorporated into capacity-building programs and performance assessment tools

Future Research

While the present study successfully developed and validated a sustainability model for community enterprises in Eastern Thailand, several avenues remain for further exploration. First, the research was limited to community enterprises within Region 2, and the results may not fully capture the diversity of practices and environmental conditions across other regions of Thailand. Future studies could expand the geographical scope to include enterprises in differrent socio-economic and cultural setting, enabling comparative analysis and broader generalization. Second, the current model focused on three key latent

constructs: Sufficeincy Economy Philosophy, Innovation Management, and Social Capital, while other potentially influential factors such as market orientation, leadership style, and digital transformation were not included. Incorporating these additional constructs could refine the model and reveal deeper interrelationships affecting sustainability. Third, the study employed a cross-sectional design, capturing data at a single point in time. Longitudinal studies could provide more robust insights into casual relationships and the dynamic natue of sustainability in community enterprises. Experimental or quasi-experimental approaches could also be used to assess the impact of targeted interventions based on the proposal model. Lastly, future research could focus on practical implementation by applying the model as a decision-support tool for policymakers and community leaders, monitoring real-world outcomes of training programs, and evaluating their effectiveness in enhancing sustainability over time.

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