

Utilization of Social Capital in Organizational Communication of Rural Micro-Entrepreneurs to Enter the Digital Ecosystem

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Abstract

The significant increase in the number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) “go digital” since the COVID-19 pandemic does not mean that they have fully entered the digital ecosystem from ordering, shipping, to payment. Those who are generally micro entrepreneurs rely more on instant messaging, social media, and cash payments. This study aims to analyse the utilization of social capital with a systems approach from organizational communication to overcome internal and external challenges and constraints of rural micro-entrepreneurs in entering the digital ecosystem. Rural micro-entrepreneurs of Komunitas Teras Ciapus in Tamansari District, Bogor Regency, West Java have social capital to help each other penetrate the market. This descriptive qualitative research used data collection techniques of focus group discussions with 63 people out of 102 community members and in-depth interviews with key informants. The results of this study show that the trust and bonding and bridging social capital built by this community are a strong foundation for adaptation to the digital ecosystem, but it is necessary to strengthen linking social capital and norms in the form of instilling modern organization culture and digital culture to carry out digital transformation.

Keywords: organization communication; system approach; social capital; rural micro-enterprises

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has become a momentum for accelerating consumer digital adoption in Indonesia. Changes in people's behavior have made many people more accustomed to using e-commerce in ordering goods and services. We Are Social noted that from 2022 to early 2023 there were 178.9 million Indonesians shopping online. That figure rose 12.8% year of year. (Datareportal.com, 2023)

Based on data from the Ministry of Communication and Information, the number of SMEs (*Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises*) utilizing digital technology in Indonesia has also increased from around 9 million businesses before the COVID-19 pandemic to 21 million businesses or around 32% of a total of 64 million SMEs (Kominfo.go.id., 2022). However, the survey results from the Badan Pusat Statistik RI (2022) noted that almost all e-commerce businesses (93.98 percent) sell online through instant messaging applications (such as WhatsApp, Line and Telegram), 48.65 percent through social media (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter), 20.64 percent have sales accounts on digital marketplaces/platforms, and only 2.05 percent of businesses use websites. In terms of payment methods, the majority of e-commerce businesses (83.11 percent) pay for orders in cash on location, 12.57 percent bank

transfers (ATM, internet banking, and mobile banking), 2.08 percent credit cards, and 2.24 percent using e-wallets.

Thus, the majority of business actors who go digital only rely on instant messages and cash payments. They do not yet have programmatic sales and promotion services from ordering, shipping, to online payments. This means that they have not fully entered the digital ecosystem that is needed by business actors to expand markets that bring together business actors and consumers without having to meet face to face.

Deputy for Entrepreneurship of the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs Siti Azizah said the number of SMEs reached 64.1 million or 99.9 percent of the total business population in Indonesia, most of which were micro businesses or as much as 99.62 percent (Antaraneews.com, 2022). Based on Peraturan Pemerintah nomor 7 Tahun 2021 tentang Kemudahan, Pelindungan, dan Pemberdayaan Koperasi dan Usaha Mikro, Kecil, dan Menengah (Government Regulation number 7 of 2021 concerning Ease, Protection and Empowerment of Cooperatives and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises), the criteria for a micro business is to have business capital of at most IDR 1 billion, excluding land and buildings where the business is located, as well as sales proceeds (turnover) a maximum of IDR 2 billion per year.

Micro enterprises in Indonesia have the potential to become a strong national economic base because there are so many of them and they have a very large absorption power. However, their obstacles in entering the digital ecosystem show that their knowledge and expertise is limited in carrying out digital transformation. Systemic policies from the government have also not been able to overcome the digital social divide in society. In fact, when micro entrepreneurs do not carry out promotions and sales in the digital ecosystem, they are unable to compete in capturing consumers who already use a lot of digital technology.

This study analyzes the use of social capital in the organizational communication of rural micro-entrepreneurs who are members of Komunitas Teras Ciapus (the Teras Ciapus Community) in Tamansari District, Bogor Regency, West Java. Komunitas Teras Ciapus was chosen because this organization accommodates business actors who produce superior products by utilizing local produce to make various types of food and drinks, such as Nutmeg Nastar, Mushroom Chips, and Wedang Belimbing Wuluh. By forming a community, rural micro-entrepreneurs take advantage of social capital as an effort to manage, improve, and utilize social relations in social capital to foster trust and cooperation (Ozgun et al., 2022).

Neira et al (2019) stated that social capital can be seen from three dimensions in the form of trust, social networks, and norms of civic engagement. Trust is a key element for sharing fundamental values, creating relationships between people, enhancing cooperation, and efficiency in transactions, both economic and social. Social networks are forms of real social interaction for both people in the network and outsiders, such as informal volunteering relationships and organizational memberships. The norm of civic engagement is participation for channeling aspirations and welfare.

Social capital can be categorized based on the level of attachment. Bonding social capital refers to strong ties between homogeneous groups, shared identity and culture, as well as intra-community networks, such as neighbors, friends and family (Cofré-Bravo et al., 2019 and Craig et al., 2023). Bridging social capital is marked by a mutually beneficial relationship in which individuals come together to achieve collective goals, focusing on solidarity, group

membership, and social cohesion (Engbers et al., 2016 and Craig et al., 2023). The linking social capital refers to a network of trusting relationships across different strata that allows the use of resources, ideas and information from institutions outside the community, such as government agencies and banks, as well as connecting to open networks. If bonding and bridging social capital are horizontal networks, linking social capital is a vertical network for accessing resources. (Cofré-Bravo et al., 2019 and Azad & Pritchard, 2023)



Source: Research Document

Figure 1. Some Products of Community Members

The chairman of Komunitas Teras Ciapus, Alta Sukajadi, explained that this community was founded in February 2020 due to complaints from micro-entrepreneurs in Tamansari District who had difficulty marketing on their own. The community is a place for business actors to learn from each other and help members to develop products and marketing. Community members carry out marketing through direct selling, social media, especially Whatsapp, to exhibitions in collaboration with the district culinary association. (Interview on 9 February 2022).

This study uses a systems approach in organizational communication. Miller (2012) explained, the systems approach views organizations as complex organisms that must interact with their environment to survive. Komunitas Teras Ciapus as an organization can be seen as a social system that has internal and external challenges and constraints that need to be overcome in order to develop.

Talcott Parsons said, all action systems can be analyzed in depth in terms of process and structure with reference to the solution of the four functional requirements if the system is to continue, which is abbreviated as AGIL (*Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration, and Latency*). *Adaptation* is an external environmental problem that refers to the process through which the social system obtains and then distributes the resources needed for its activities. The *Goal Attainment* function is a matter of the external environment, this refers to the formulation of social system goals and the motivation and mobilization of resources directed at achieving these goals. The *Integration* function is an internal organizational matter concerned with the processes that ensure the coordination of the various relationships that

make up a social system. Finally, the *Latency* function refers to the internal processes by which social systems maintain normative patterns and manage the pressures and tensions of actors. (Treviño, 2005)

Based on AGIL Theory, the temporal orientation of the four functions is different. A (*Adaptation*) is a way of adapting and I (*Integration*) is a coordinating effort which is a short-term target. The G (*Goal attainment*) for the main goal of a social system and L (*Latency*) as a cultural system are medium and long term targets. The *Adaptation* ability of rural micro-entrepreneurs (A) to changes in external behavior of consumers who are increasingly accustomed to using e-commerce is a short-term target. It is hoped that Komunitas Teras Ciapus will be able to help its members carry out digital acceleration. This requires integration (I) or internal consolidation of the community as a short term target. Medium and long term external objectives (G) include the efforts of Komunitas Teras Ciapus as a forum for rural micro-entrepreneurs to enter the digital ecosystem. Meanwhile, the medium and long-term internal aspects (L) are related to the cultural system within the community to develop themselves in a sustainable manner.

Social capital is the main resource that SMEs can mobilize to utilize resources embedded in internal and external relations to build business resilience capacity (Ozanne et al., 2022). The contribution of social capital can be analyzed based on its utilization in organizational communication. The formulation of the research problem is how does the use of social capital in organizational communication of rural micro-entrepreneurs of Komunitas Teras Ciapus overcome internal and external challenges and obstacles to enter the digital ecosystem?

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which social capital capabilities in Komunitas Teras Ciapus overcome internal and external challenges and constraints in carrying out digital transformation. The academic urgency of this research contributes to the study of social capital for rural micro-entrepreneurs to optimize economic benefits and social benefits. Practically, research is expected to provide input to stakeholders, such as the government, business associations, communities, and universities, to optimize the potential and constraints of rural micro-entrepreneurs in entering the digital economic ecosystem.

Method

This research uses a qualitative descriptive research type. The goal is that this research can collect data directly from participants to develop concepts and theories in understanding social reality (Mohajan, 2018). The unit of analysis is Komunitas Teras Ciapus as a forum for rural micro-entrepreneurs in Tamansari District, Bogor Regency.

Data collection techniques are Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and in-depth interviews. FGD participants comprised more than half of the total community members, namely 63 community members who were divided into 5 FGD groups. The FGD was conducted at Gedung Pala, Tamansari District, Bogor Regency on 15-16 April 2023.

The in-depth interviews were conducted with 5 key informants, namely the chairman, secretary, treasurer, and active members of the community as well as the Head of the Economic and Development Section of the Tamansari District Government, Bogor Regency. In-depth interviews were conducted at the same place on 16 April 2023. In-depth interviews

were conducted after the FGD so that researchers could ask key informants about a number of problems and information obtained in the FGD.

Data analysis and interpretation was carried out in three stages including open coding by creating categories of the information obtained, axial coding by selecting one of the categories and placing it in a theoretical model, and selective coding by compiling a narrative of the relationships between categories (Creswell, 2017). Technique Triangulation were used in checking the validity of the data where researchers compared the results of FGDs and interviews.

Results and Discussion

a. Social Capital in Komunitas Teras Ciapus

The social capital owned by rural micro-entrepreneurs in Komunitas Teras Ciapus is illustrated in three dimensions (table 1). From *the trust* dimension, the community gains the trust of its members and fosters trust among fellow members. Members also build mutual trust and mutual assistance among members. This, among other things, is done by purchasing members' products by other members to increase sales among members.

A sense of trust arises because of the deep closeness between members of the community. They build it without looking at each other's backgrounds so that trust grows not only personally but also in entrepreneurship together. This attitude of mutual assistance among rural micro-entrepreneurs encourages sales among members without highlighting the competition among them.



Source: Research Document

Figure 2. Promotion of Member Product Posted on Whatsapp Status

From *the social network* dimension, Komunitas Teras Ciapus establishes good relationships with its members and among its members. The community's chairman actively visits its members for discussions and to gather input. This is beneficial in exploring the business problems experienced by the members and finding solutions. For example, the community advocates for rental fee waivers for its members if there are events or bazaars.

Intensive communication among community members is conducted through face-to-face interactions, community gatherings, as well as private chats and WhatsApp groups. Community members take the initiative to gather together. The community also facilitates organizational communication through messages in WhatsApp groups to discuss the progress that has been made and the goals yet to be achieved.

The exchange of information among members concerns information on business development opportunities around events and promotions. They provide each other with information on bazaar events in various places. Community members also help each other promote fellow members' business products, share opportunities and experiences.

However, the efforts of Komunitas Teras Ciapus are still limited to building linking social capital. Komunitas Teras Ciapus is only coordinating quite intensely with the Tamansari District. Beyond that, the community collaboration with other parties is still incidental, such as in socialization, training, and organizing events with the Bogor Regency Government and business associations.

Furthermore, the dimensions of *norms of civic engagement*, Komunitas Teras Ciapus prioritizes deliberations for consensus if there is a problem or information that needs to be decided. The information obtained is discussed first in the WhatsApp Group so that all members feel involved. If there is no response on the Whatsapp Group, the chairman will talk to other executive of the Komunitas Teras Ciapus. A sense of kinship and respect for the obligations of fellow members is also felt in the community.

But modern organizational culture and digital culture have not grown well. As is the case with micro-entrepreneurs in general, rural micro-entrepreneurs in Komunitas Teras Ciapus have unorganized administrative and financial problems, completeness of product permits, and business capital which is often mixed with family spending. In terms of digital culture, they are only used to using Whatsapp to promote and sell, while other social media such as Instagram, marketplace and non-cash payment systems are still very rarely used.

Table 1. Selective Coding of Social Capital

Concept	Selective
Trust	Komunitas Teras Ciapus is trusted by its members and fosters trust among fellow members. Members also build mutual trust and mutual assistance among themselves. This trust was built to encourage collective business progress.
Social network	Komunitas Teras Ciapus has succeeded in facilitating <i>bonding and bridging social capital</i> but efforts to generate <i>linking social capital</i> are still limited and tend to be incidental.
Norms of civic engagement	Komunitas Teras Ciapus succeeded in building the norms of deliberation for consensus, respecting the obligations of fellow members, and kinship. However, micro-entrepreneurs in Komunitas Teras Ciapus do not yet have a modern organizational culture and digital culture.

Source: Primary Research Data

b. *Adaptation, Goal attainment, Integration, and Latency* in Komunitas Teras Ciapus

In *Adaptation* ability to the external environment, rural micro-entrepreneurs in Komunitas Teras Ciapus try to adapt by using social media, but they generally only use Whatsapp as a medium for promotion and sales. A small number of micro entrepreneurs use other social media such as Instagram but not regularly. In addition, they also rely more on direct sales and word of mouth rather than digital media.

The Covid-19 pandemic made it difficult for them to sell directly. However, after the pandemic subsided, a number of bazaar events began to be actively held again, such as the bazaar in IPB (Bogor Agricultural Institute). They actively participate in bazaar events where

information is obtained from fellow community members. Communication and interaction between them fostered awareness to create a shared digital platform, especially Instagram and marketplaces such as tokopedia managed by the community.

Then in terms of *Goal attainment* as a medium-long term goal with the external environment, these micro-entrepreneurs have difficulty entering the modern sector. Financial and human resources constraints make the food and beverage products they produce not durable. They do not yet have a license from BPOM (Badan Pengawas Obat dan Makanan). Local government policies also have not systematically encouraged business actors to enter the modern sector. Even so, Tamansari District Office facilitated the arrangement of halal label for local micro enterprises so that several snack products of the community members had obtained free halal labels.

The management and members of Komunitas Teras Ciapus agreed to improve the promotion and sales of their members through social media Instagram and marketplace to accommodate various members' products which are targeted to start in 2023. However, if the standards and packaging of the products have not changed, they will have difficulty competing in a digital ecosystem that offers many higher-quality and eye-catching products. Organizational management also needs to be improved, such as stock management as well as administration and finance to facilitate online sales transactions.

The community cooperation with external parties is generally only incidental, both with private parties and government agencies. Tamansari District Government is only planning to provide a place to sell goods within the subdistrict office. If this is realized, it is not certain that it will attract many buyers for direct sales because the location is not in front of a strategic road. Even so, such a venue is necessary to foster buyer confidence when conducting online transactions because there is a clear business address in the government office.

Furthermore, in terms of *Integration* as an internal coordinating effort is a short-term target. The sense of togetherness in Komunitas Teras Ciapus is quite strong. There is concern from the management for the members by often visiting the members. The administrators and members also often gather together, especially at Gedung Pala. Gedung Pala is a multi-purpose building that has an office space and two kiosks. The place, which is owned by the family of one of the community's advisor, provides two kiosks to sell the products of a number of community members.

Whatsapp Group is a medium for intensive information and communication between the executives and fellow members. Bonding and bridging social capital have been successfully built among micro-entrepreneurs in Komunitas Teras Ciapus. For business development, the community has taken care of the legality of its deed of establishment.

Finally, *Latency* is a medium and long term target for improving the cultural system in the internal environment of Komunitas Teras Ciapus. The attitude of mutual assistance between micro-entrepreneurs encourages sales among members without prominent competition between them. But these mutual assistance efforts have not encouraged them fully into the digital ecosystem.

In human resource development, they have difficulty embedding modern organizational culture and digital culture. Even so, Komunitas Teras Ciapus has prepared one administrator to manage the social media platforms and marketplaces managed by the community. This administrator is a member of the community who graduated from D3 Informatics who

actively accesses the internet to find information and open social media. In collaboration with Pancasila University, administrators and several members of the internet-literate community will be trained in digital training and administrative and financial management in September 2023.

Table 2. Selective Coding Implementation of AGIL Theory

Concept	Selective
Adaptation	They generally only use WhatsApp as a medium of promotion and sales. Communication and interaction between them raise awareness to create a shared digital platform.
Goal attainment	The various products produced have not met the standards of the modern sector market. They still have difficulty competing in the digital ecosystem. Organizational management also needs to be improved. Community cooperation with external parties is only incidental.
Integration	The sense of togetherness in the community is quite strong and there is a caring board. Executives and members often gather together and are active on the Whatsapp Group. The community has taken care of the legality of its founding deed.
Latency	Mutual assistance and trust drive sales between members without standing out in the competition between them. But they are having a hard time embedding modern organizational culture and digital culture.

Source: Primary Research Data

c. Discussion

The use of social capital in a systems approach to organizational communication can be seen in terms of *Adaptation*, *Goal attainment*, *Integration*, and *Latency*. In terms of *Adaptation*, Komunitas Teras Ciapus builds trust among fellow members. The members build mutual trust and help each other, for example, each member collectively collects funds to buy other members' products.

In this *Adaptation* process, there is a transformation of bonding social capital into bridging social capital facilitated by the community to help fellow members. The community is also able to build norms of deliberation and kinship. Members rely more on direct sales and word of mouth than on digital media, but the use of social capital raises the awareness of administrators and members to create a shared digital platform.

Then in terms of Goal attainment, efforts to help each other in the community have not encouraged members to enter the modern sector. Financial and human resource factors hamper efforts to improve product quality and packaging as well as improve modern organizational management. This makes it difficult to promote and sell their products in the digital ecosystem.

Linking social capital has not yet been formed because the existing collaborations, both collaborations with the private sector and government agencies, are still limited and tend to be incidental. They are unfamiliar with modern standards, digital ecosystems and modern organizational management. However, in terms of norms, they at least have a strong desire to change the habit of producing products to meet modern market standards and carry out promotions and sales that can compete in the digital ecosystem.

Furthermore, in terms of *Integration*, community administrators have concern for members' business problems and accommodate the aspirations of their members, such as fighting for capital relief for renting a place if there is a bazaar and looking for a business place. The administrators often visit members' places and they discuss together. The intensity of interaction between administrators and members fosters a strong sense of togetherness in the community.

In the *Integration* process, there is a strengthening of bonding and bridging social capital for consolidation during the three years the community has been established. The community has also taken care of the legality of the deed of establishment at the notary. Legality became the basis for developing a more modern organization.

In terms of *Latency*, trust among members has been built in entrepreneurship together. But efforts to help each other in the community have not been able to build linking social capital. They are also still struggling to instill a modern organizational culture and digital culture. The community is only at the stage of preparing administrators to be trained to manage social media digital platforms and marketplaces.

Tittenbrun (2013) explained that each subsystem requires input from other subsystems nearby in order to continue to function properly. In Komunitas Teras Ciapus, the *Integration* aspect has succeeded in building internal organizational trust, bonding and bridging social capital, and norms of togetherness. The *Integration* aspect can be a strong foundation for advancing rural micro-enterprises in Komunitas Teras Ciapus. This is in accordance with the findings of Yetim & Yetim (2014) that social capital mediates the relationship between fulfillment of needs with a sense of community and individual well-being.

But in terms of *Goal attainment*, external networks that have not been built at the linking social capital level have an impact on *Adaptation* capabilities. Local government programs to promote micro-enterprises are also incidental. As for *Latency*, the community has not yet developed a modern organizational culture and digital culture.

Matriks 1. Utilization of Social Capital in a System Approach

AGIL Theory	Social Capital		
	Trust	Social Network	Norms of civic engagement
Adaptation	The trust and helpfulness among members that the community facilitates drives member sales.	There is a transformation of bonding social capital into bridging social capital facilitated by the community to help each other.	The community prioritizes deliberation and kinship. There is an awareness to create a shared digital platform.
Goal Attainment	Efforts to help each other have not encouraged members to enter the modern sector and compete in the digital ecosystem.	Linking social capital has not yet been formed because existing cooperation is generally incidental.	The members of the community were unfamiliar with modern market standards, digital ecosystems, and modern organizational management.
Integration	There is concern from	There has been a	For business

	the management and the intensity of interaction fosters a strong sense of community.	process of strengthening bonding and bridging social capital for consolidation since the community was founded.	development, the community has taken care of legality.
Latency	Growing trust among members in entrepreneurship together.	Efforts to help each other have not been a strong foundation for building linking social capital.	They still find it difficult to instill modern organizational culture and digital culture.

Source: Primary Research Data

Amidst the development of digital marketing, rural micro-entrepreneurs in Komunitas Teras Ciapus have not fully entered the digital ecosystem. Similar to the majority of micro-micro-entrepreneurs that have gone digital in Indonesia, micro-entrepreneurs in Komunitas Teras Ciapus do not have programmatic promotion and sales services from ordering, delivery, to online payment. Komunitas Teras Ciapus facilitates knowledge sharing and mutual assistance, but has not optimally improved product standardization and digital skills of its members.

Research by Lyu et al. (2022) found a relationship between social capital and company innovation performance during the Covid-19 pandemic. Naranjo-Zolotov et al. (2022) explained the contribution of bonding and bridging social capital to optimize the use of information and communication technology (ICT), especially in the use of online social networking sites. As for the research by Ozgun et al. (2022) show that in organization social capital plays an important role during innovation activities, which in turn affects organizational performance, but it occurs only through the mediation of intellectual capital.

The findings in Komunitas Teras Ciapus explain that the bonding and bridging social capital built has not optimized the use of ICT. Human resource problems hinder the organization's efforts to encourage its members to carry out digital transformation. Thus, Komunitas Teras Ciapus needs to build linking social capital and develop the members' human resources to meet modern market standards and enter the digital ecosystem.

Conclusion

Komunitas Teras Ciapus has been quite successful in building *Integration* as a short-term internal coordinating effort to produce a strong sense of togetherness in the community. Here the community transforms bonding social capital and bridging social capital to help each other. The norms of deliberation and kinship are also created in the community.

Trust and bonding and bridging social capital built by the community are a strong foundation for adapting to the digital ecosystem. But both *Adaptation* as a short-term external target and *Goal attainment* as an external medium-long term goal require strengthening of social capital linking and norms in the form of instilling a modern organizational culture and digital culture. The community has not yet generated those external networks and norms.

The use of social capital has raised their awareness to create a shared digital platform. But Latency's efforts to improve the cultural system in the internal environment of the

community must start with improving modern organizational management and increasing the digital skills of the community members. Study of Cui & Hu (2012) explained that investing in organizational culture has an undeniable effect on productivity.

The community needs to collaborate with a number of stakeholders, such as local governments, related ministries, business associations and universities. This collaboration is not only in the context of preparing training and mentoring on an ongoing basis, but also to build linking social capital. Thus, rural micro-entrepreneurs in the community can be more prepared to carry out digital transformation.

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