

# CAPITAL IN WORKERS' SURVIVAL STRATEGIES UMKM KERUPUK KOMPLANG IN BENGKULU CITY



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## Abstract

This study aims to examine the survival strategies employed by MSME workers in the kerupuk komplang sector of Bengkulu City. This sector serves not only as a local culinary provider, but also as a significant source of income for the community. However, businesses and workers face several challenges, including changes in income, rising raw material costs, limited funds, and dependence on the local market. This research employs a qualitative approach, utilising the case study method. Data were collected through various means, including observation, document collection, and in-depth interviews with five key informant workers, business owners, and family members who are directly involved in the komplang cracker production process. The findings of this study reveal that MSME workers implement various ways to survive, both economically and socially. Techniques include job variation, austerity, saving even small amounts of money, and leveraging social networks for informal support, such as interest-free loans or labour assistance. Social capital is a crucial element in enhancing workers' resilience. In this context, Robert D. Putnam's theory of social capital is highly relevant, given the importance of networks, norms, and trust in fostering mutually beneficial social cooperation. Social capital is evident in the form of community solidarity, mutual trust between individuals, and the exchange of resources within family environments and the workplace. Even in times of crisis, social capital serves as a major lifeline. From a theoretical point of view, social workers face economic labour.

**Keywords:** MSMEs, survival strategies, social capital, komplang crackers, economic sociology.

## INTRODUCTION

In terms of the country's economy, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) play a crucial role as the foundation of the local economy in various regions. One of the interesting aspects of MSMEs is their ability to survive in the face of various challenges, including both macroeconomic factors such as inflation and market competition, and microeconomic ones like limited capital, access to markets, and technological limitations for production. Survival strategies are crucial for the survival of MSMEs, as the sector is highly vulnerable to political changes and economic crises. Under these conditions, MSME actors often rely on various adaptation strategies, encompassing economic, social, and cultural aspects, to maintain their income and business continuity. Small, medium, and micro enterprises (MSMEs) are engaged in science that contributes substantially to national economic growth. MSMEs in Indonesia employ 9.7% of the labour force and contribute more than 60% of the country's GDP. In Indonesia, particularly the coastal areas of the Sumatra and Kalimantan islands, the *komplang* cracker industry is a well-developed sector driven by MSMEs and closely tied to household life. One of the striking characteristics of MSMEs is the *komplang* cracker industry, a traditional food made from fish and containing cultural values and economic opportunities (Suci et al., 2021).

Bengkulu City is a coastal region with numerous marine resources, making it one of the renowned production centers for *komplang* crackers. This industry sector offers numerous employment opportunities for many people, particularly women and households. Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises in this area face several constraints, such as changes in raw material prices, limited production tools, and competition with large industrialised countries. They apply several strategies, ranging from diversifying work to utilising social networks and family cooperation, as well as seeking support from the local government. This research reflects local practices within the Bengkulu Focus Context, demonstrating the distinct social and economic dynamics that influence the sustainability of *Kerupuk Komplang* MSMEs in the city. The food industry, which comprises a large number of small businesses (such as crackers), employs around 38,960 workers out of a total of 40,960 workers in micro and macro industries, according to BPS data for Bengkulu Province 2020. However, there are only about five formal enterprises in the city registered in the *Kerupuk* MSME database (e.g., *Kerupuk Utomo Jaya*, *Pelangi Fadiawati*, *Baruna Tebeng Agung*, *Bukit*, and *Barokah Efendi*), and each of these enterprises typically employs between four and fifteen workers. In addition, this data does

not include the number of employees involved in Bengkulu City's komplang kerupuk businesses (Ardin & Hidayat, 2020).

Despite its small scale, the komplang cracker industry in Bengkulu City is one of the MSME sectors that has survived and developed locally. The combination of tradition, family, and the human resources it generates form MSMEs. Field data indicate that the production process of Lasmi's kerupuk komplang business, located in Bengkulu City, employs only around five people. They are generally family members or close neighbours working in the informal sector. One of the most notable issues is the low income of the employees, who earn an average of around Rp300,000 per month. This is because these MSMEs are run from home and have limited production capacity. Daily production is not always consistent and depends on the availability of orders or raw materials. The ability of business owners to pay employees is minimal due to poor sales. Often, salaries are determined by an inconsistent daily wage or profit-sharing model. This income is far below the Minimum Wage and insufficient to fulfil the needs of a decent living. The workers at Kerupuk Komplang are in mediocre economic conditions, but they can survive in various ways. Workers use a variety of survival tactics, including part-time jobs outside of kerupuk production, small-scale trading, and agricultural assistance (Safrianti & Puspita, 2021).

Most research on MSMEs in Bengkulu has focused on the entrepreneurial, management, and innovation elements of business owners. For example, research by Jamicho (2022) and Saputra et al. (2021) focuses on business strategies in the face of crisis, but does not address the socio-economic circumstances of workers. Meanwhile, workers in the informal sector, such as cracker artisans, have minimal income and are in unstable working conditions. To date, no research has specifically explored the survival strategies of MSME workers in the Komplang cracker industry, including the role of social capital in supporting their economic sustainability.

This study aims to bridge this gap by conducting a qualitative analysis of the survival strategies employed by MSME workers in the Komplang Cracker Industry in Bengkulu City. The primary research focus includes patterns of economic adaptation, social networks, informal working relationships, and how social capital is utilised to deal with economic pressures. This research is expected to provide theoretical insights for the fields of sociological economics and industrial studies, as well as a basis for making socio-economic policies that support workers in the informal sector.

Practically, this research provides relevant information for the development of socio-economic policies that favour small industry workers, especially in the traditional food MSME sector. The results of this study can be utilised by local governments and related agencies to better understand the socio-economic conditions of MSME workers and the forms of social dependence they build to survive. In addition, the findings of this study are also helpful for komplang crackers business actors in designing a work system that pays more attention to workers' welfare through a community and trust-based approach. For academics and practitioners of industrial sociology, this research provides empirical insights into the significance of social relations in the structure of work within the household industry, which has received less attention in the discourse on economic development (Gusriza et al., 2023). Practically, the results of this study provide valuable insights for the formulation of social and economic policies that are more supportive of informal workers, especially in traditional MSME sectors such as the komplang cracker industry. Local governments, MSME support agencies, and civil society organisations can use the results of this study as a basis for designing community-based interventions that can strengthen social solidarity and expand local support networks. In addition, this research could also encourage small businesses to adopt collective and participatory approaches to labour management, thereby improving workers' welfare more sustainably. Thus, this research not only contributes to the academic field but also has a real practical impact in supporting the empowerment of workers in the informal sector in Indonesia.

Social capital is an important concept in economic sociology that helps us understand how individuals or groups can survive in the face of limited official resources. According to Pierre Bourdieu (2021), social capital is a collection of resources acquired through a network of social relationships that can be utilised to gain benefits, both in economic and symbolic forms. Bourdieu distinguishes social capital from two other types of capital, namely economic capital which includes financial and material assets and cultural capital which includes knowledge, skills and education. In societies with low economic status or the informal sector, social capital is often the only type of capital available and useful. In this context, social networks, kinship ties and shared trust serve as the main foundation for survival, especially for groups of workers without social security or regular income. In the informal sphere, social capital not only serves as a complement, but also becomes the main source of sustaining economic power. Portes (2021) argues that social capital has three main roles: providing access to resources, providing social supervision, and building collective identity. This is particularly relevant

to the conditions of komplang cracker MSME workers in Bengkulu City, who generally operate within the context of households and local communities. In situations of low income and informal employment, workers rely on networks of family, neighbours and friends for assistance such as loans, volunteer labour or moral support. Social capital in this context replaces the role of formal financial or collateral institutions that are difficult for micro-enterprises to access (Siahaan et al., 2024).

Previous studies have also emphasised the importance of social capital in supporting the economic sustainability of the informal sector. Prakasa and Rachmawati (2020), in a study of home-based batik workers in Central Java, found that involvement in production groups and community networks helped provide access to markets and raw materials in a more efficient and mutually beneficial manner. On the other hand, Heryanto and Wahyuni (2021) found in a study of mobile food vendors in major Indonesian cities that social relationships between sellers, as well as with customers, can create a sense of security, income stability, and sustainable business opportunities. These studies demonstrate that economic success in the informal sector is significantly influenced by the strength of social relationships and a culture of cooperation, known as *gotong royong*.

Thus, in this study, Bourdieu's social capital theory is used as an analytical framework to understand how komplang cracker MSME workers in Bengkulu City survive amidst a vulnerable economic structure. Social capital is understood as an adaptive strategy to overcome the limitations of economic and cultural capital. This research aims to examine in depth how social networks, trust, and solidarity practices at the community level are key factors in sustaining the survival of workers in the home industry sector. This approach allows us to view survival strategies not just as an individual matter, but also as the result of collective forces and interconnected social structures.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research employs a qualitative approach, focusing on case studies, to gain an in-depth understanding of how komplang cracker MSME workers survive in Bengkulu City. According to Sugiyono (2022:9), a qualitative approach is a research method used to explore natural object conditions, with the researcher acting as the main instrument. The purpose of qualitative research is to gain an understanding of social phenomena through the views of the participants, where the data obtained is not in the form of participants. Sugiyono also stated that qualitative research is conducted when researchers

want to understand the meaning behind complex social phenomena and try to capture social reality thoroughly and contextually. In the context of this research, a qualitative approach is appropriate because it can reveal the dynamics of survival strategies of komplang cracker MSME workers in Bengkulu City in greater depth. These workers are under various economic and social pressures, so the strategies they apply are very varied and contextualised. Through a qualitative approach, researchers can explore the life experiences, individual views, and ways of coping with challenges faced by MSME workers from their perspectives.

This approach also facilitates researchers in establishing a more intimate relationship with informants, so that the information obtained becomes richer and has a more profound meaning. Furthermore, this study draws on social capital theory as its analytical basis. In this context, social capital refers to the social networks, trust relationships, and norms of mutual assistance that MSME workers utilize in conducting their daily activities. A qualitative approach is particularly relevant for social capital theory-based research because it can help researchers understand how social relationships and trust between individuals shape survival strategies, such as financial support, labour assistance, or information on job opportunities. Social capital theory itself is widely explained by thinkers such as Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, and Robert Putnam, who highlight the importance of social relationships in creating resources that individuals or communities can access.

The link between qualitative methods and social capital theory in this study lies in their shared focus on relationships between people and how these relationships influence social action. From in-depth interviews with Komplang cracker MSME workers, it was found that networks of family, neighbours, and coworkers play an important role in maintaining their survival amid the economic crisis. For example, when income is insufficient, some workers receive help from neighbours in the form of interest-free loans or sharing food from their businesses. Such practices can only be fully understood through a qualitative approach, as they are contextualised and cannot be accurately represented with numbers. Sugiyono (2022) also explained that a qualitative approach is the most suitable method for understanding the survival strategies of MSME workers from their perspectives, as well as the role of social capital in these strategies. This approach not only provides deeper insight into the social realities faced by workers but also contributes to the development of social theory in the context of community-based economy and MSMEs.

Data were collected through three main qualitative techniques: direct observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted at the komplang cracker MSME production site, while interviews focused on five key informants selected through purposive sampling techniques. The informants consisted of four women and one man, with backgrounds as workers in production, frying, distribution, marketing, and domestic helpers of business owners. Each has between 2 and 8 years of working experience in the home-based cracker industry. Documentation was conducted through photos of production activities, records of working conditions, and supporting documents, such as sales receipts and daily business records. To maintain data validity, this study used source triangulation and member check techniques. Triangulation was conducted by comparing interview results from five informants with observation and documentation data. Additionally, a member check was conducted by asking the informants to review the quotations or interpretations of the data to ensure their conformity with their experiences.

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2012) interactive model, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification. Data from interviews and observations were organised into key themes such as "low income," "dual employment," "social support," and "consumption savings." Conclusions were drawn gradually and continuously. Conclusions were drawn gradually and continuously throughout the research process. This process was iterative, allowing for a thorough understanding of survival strategies within the context of the informal economy. The research took place over three months, from April to June 2025, with a total of 24 days of field observations and interviews in three kerupuk komplang business locations in Bengkulu City. This approach was chosen because it enables researchers to capture subjective meanings, lived experiences, and social dynamics in an informal work context. Sugiyono (2021) states that qualitative methods focus on understanding social reality directly, with the researcher serving as the primary tool. In line with Afrizal's (2021) view, this approach facilitates the exploration of workers.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

This research was conducted in Kelurahan Rawa Makmur Permai, Bengkulu City, involving five respondents who work in the kerupuk komplang MSME sector. The interviews revealed that all respondents are in an unstable socio-economic situation and

are under considerable financial pressure. Their average monthly income was in the range of Rp750,000 to Rp1,000,000, while household expenditure was between Rp1. 700,000 to Rp3,000,000. This mismatch between income and expenditure forces them to implement various adaptive and innovative survival strategies, both individually and collectively. One important result from the field is that the survival strategies adopted by workers not only involve additional work or side businesses, but also exhibit strong patterns of social solidarity.

For example, Mrs. Y (39 years old), in addition to working as a *kerupuk* production worker, also sells fried foods every afternoon and relies on support from her family members. She often supplies necessities such as rice from her neighbours and receives both moral and financial support from her first child, who has started working. On the other hand, Pak R (43 years old), who is in charge of selling crackers, also helps out at his neighbour's motorcycle workshop and receives an imbalance from the proceeds of his family's garden, which he manages while working. Mrs. S (34 years old) relies on the strength of her extended family network, which provides collective support. She works part-time as a tailor and occasionally takes orders from neighbours. In addition, she is active in family *arisan* activities, which she considers an emergency reserve fund. Mrs. A (40 years old) runs a small agricultural business growing vegetables in a small plot of land around the house, and also sells homemade snacks at nearby stalls.

Meanwhile, Mrs. N (42 years old), who has five children, relies heavily on the social network within her mother's prayer group. She often receives food aid as well as second-hand clothes from other members. Additionally, her teenage children contribute to the family's economic situation by working as freelancers. Apart from economic strategies and social solidarity, it was revealed that the value of trust and the norm of assisting each other when someone is sick or facing financial difficulties. They also share information about part-time job opportunities and more affordable raw material suppliers. Such practices show that social capital is a crucial aspect of survival, not just formal working relationships, but also informal social networks that create a sense of belonging and shared responsibility.



### Profile of Research Respondents

No.	Initials	Gender	Age	Position	Experience Work experience	Income	Information
1.	Mrs Y	Female	39	Production	8 years	IDR 600,000	Selling fried food, assisted by children and siblings.
2.	Mr R	Male	43	Selling crackers	5 years	IDR 900,000	Helping in the workshop, proceeds from the family garden
3.	Mrs S	Female	34	Production	3 years	IDR 650,000	Part-time tailor, assisted by family
4.	Mrs A	Female	40	Production	4 years	IDR 600,000	Agricultural business and selling
5.	Mrs N	Female	42	Production	2 years	IDR 700,000	Helped by her children

Another finding is that these MSME workers have strong attachments to their communities. They do not want to leave their jobs, even if the income is small, because of the social ties and sense of security they feel from their work environment and the surrounding community. Some of them stated that the camaraderie at work and emotional support from colleagues were among the main reasons they stayed. Overall, the research findings indicate that how Komplang cracker MSMEs survive not only reflects personal economic endeavours, but also demonstrates the strength of social networks formed through family relationships, neighbourhoods, and communities based on local religious and cultural values. These efforts are a tangible manifestation of the use of social capital as an invisible but essential resource in supporting the survival of low-income communities.

In this study, it was found that social capital is one of the primary strategies for survival, especially in the face of unfavourable economic conditions and low worker incomes. They not only rely on salaries from their primary job, but also draw support from their social environment, including family, neighbours, religious communities, and relationships among fellow workers. For example, Mrs. Y draws on her brother and her first child to meet her daily needs. At the same time, Mrs. N is actively involved in the

recitation community, which provides both moral and material support. Mr R uses his relationship with his neighbours to find additional work in the workshop, and Mrs A runs a small farming business as a form of economic cooperation within the family. This phenomenon aligns with Robert D. Putnam's (2020) perspective that social networks encompass relationships between individuals that facilitate collective action and foster solidarity within society. In this context, social networks serve as a kind of safety net, helping workers navigate difficult economic circumstances.

Besides Putnam, James Coleman also emphasises that social networks act as a way to facilitate individual action in the context of social structures. He views social networks as an inherent aspect of human relationships that can be leveraged to obtain economic resources, such as informal loans, labour assistance, or job access information. Findings in the field, such as borrowing rice from one another, sharing information about jobs, and gotong royong in community activities, are clear examples of the utilisation of social networks, moreover, from Pierre Bourdieu's From this perspective, social networks are not just a collection of relationships, but also a symbolic power that can be transformed into forms of economic and cultural capital.

In this case, participating in communities such as recitation groups or family social gatherings not only strengthens solidarity but also provides access to practical resources, including in-kind assistance, business information, and even potential customers. Thus, the findings in the field strongly indicate how social networks function as an adaptation mechanism for MSME workers in facing the challenges of life. The interpersonal relationships and social trust that develop in their living and working environments have become the primary bulwark in facing economic challenges, as well as a survival strategy that cannot be replaced by formal systems, which are rarely present in their lives.

## Discussion

This study examines how social capital is utilised by workers in Komplang cracker MSMEs in Bengkulu City as part of a survival strategy amid challenging economic conditions. The findings show that although workers' incomes are below what is considered a decent level, they are still able to survive thanks to support from their neighbours, both material and non-material. In this context, social capital plays a crucial role in ensuring workers' survival. This social capital includes a network of social relationships, mutual trust between individuals, norms of mutual assistance, and involvement in social groups such as recitation, arisan, and work communities. In line

with Robert Putnam's (2020) view, social power serves to strengthen solidarity and encourage collective action. These social forces can create a system of mutual aid and gotong royong, both among the workers and between members of the communities in which they live.

For example, some interviewees, such as Mrs. Y and Mrs. N, utilized family networks and the recitation community to obtain basic food assistance, informal loans, and emotional support. Meanwhile, Mr. R and Mrs. A used good relationships with their neighbours to obtain additional work or share agricultural produce informally. This illustrates a form of "bridging social capital" and "bonding", where proximity between individuals, whether on a small or large scale, provides access to resources that support their survival. According to James Coleman (2021), social power is also how individuals can achieve goals through the social norms that exist in society. In this case, norms of mutual aid and trust between neighbours are part of a social network that facilitates access to emergency assistance, employment information, and side business opportunities. Social power is even more significant than economic or educational capital, as it stems from the social relationships that have been established and become part of the local culture.

Pierre Bourdieu's theory adds that social capital can be transformed into economic and symbolic capital. In this study, active involvement in the community, familial relations, and informal networks can generate support commensurate with economic value. Assistance such as rice loans, job lifts, and collaboration in side businesses show how social power can be translated as a tool for survival. These findings suggest that the survival strategies of MSME workers are collective and community-based, rather than individualised. They are not only dependent on themselves, but also hope and rely on the strength of the social environment in which they operate. This suggests that local social structures and norms of gotong royong remain highly relevant in supporting economically marginalized groups. Therefore, this discussion confirms that social capital is an important resource in the survival strategies of MSME workers. In the context of an informal economy with minimal state protection, the existence of social forces can be a real and functional solution for those struggling in the lower sector. This research also provides evidence that a sociological approach that focuses on social relations and community structures is necessary to understand the socioeconomic dynamics of people at the bottom of society.

This research emphasises the importance of social capital as a key source for economic resilience amidst the limitations of financial capital. Referring to Pierre Bourdieu's theory, social capital is the accumulation of existing or potential resources that are connected through a network of social relationships that know and recognise each other (Bourdieu, 2021). Within the scope of this research, social capital appears in various forms, one of which is bonding social capital, characterized by strong relationships within homogeneous groups, such as families and neighbourhoods. This is evident in the act of helping each other between family members (Mrs. Y and Mrs. S), sharing agricultural produce (Mr. R), or borrowing groceries (Mrs. N).

Embedded social capital, i.e. social relationships integrated within the household structure and the work community. Workers not only share housing, but also economic resources and household obligations.

Symbolic capital, such as the trust built up in recitation groups (Mrs.N), shows that networks based on spiritual values can also be transformed into material and psychological support. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of this social capital is subject to structural constraints.

The tension with the class system is evident: all informants are in the lower class, hold informal jobs, and have no social security. The social capital they possess, while strong, is insufficient to significantly improve their economic status. On the other hand, gender structures also play an important role. Although there is no evidence of wage discrimination between men and women, differences in physical capacity affect productivity and labour output, and add to the burden for women who have to carry out multiple responsibilities.

Thus, the survival strategies of *komplang* cracker MSME workers are a complex form of social adaptation, illustrating the linkages between social structures and economic practices. Social capital is a major bulwark amid crisis, but it cannot be separated from the systemic constraints that shape workers' vulnerability.

In this study, social capital emerges as a crucial dimension in the survival strategies of *Komplang* cracker MSME workers in Bengkulu City. Social capital, which encompasses social networks, trust relationships, and norms of reciprocity, plays a significant role in supporting workers' economic well-being. However, in practice, this social capital is not free from tensions with existing social structures, especially in terms of class, status, and gender. In terms of class, the majority of workers are in a lower-class position that has limited access to economic resources. Social capital compensates for this

limitation, where the solidarity of fellow workers or support from social relations outside the workplace becomes the mainstay of life sustainability. However, this class position still structurally limits their ability to improve their standard of living, as they are in an informal work system with low income and no guarantee of permanent employment.

In terms of social status, all workers are generally positioned horizontally as production labourers without any distinction from the MSME management. This indicates that formal status within the work structure tends to be equal. However, social status outside the workplace, such as educational background or domestic roles in the family, still influences their survival strategies. Interestingly, in the context of gender, there is no differential treatment between men and women in terms of the work system or wages. This suggests a form of formal equality in labour relations.

However, sociologically, tensions emerge in the aspect of physical capacity. In the practice of production work, women's physical capacity is generally weaker than men's in terms of lifting or processing large quantities of materials. This leads to differences in the results achieved, even though the work system and wages are equalised. Thus, in a naturally different working position, labour outcomes are unequal despite equal structural treatment. This inequality does not stem from discrimination, but rather from a division of labour that does not consider the biological aspects and needs of women's dual roles, especially for those who also carry out domestic responsibilities (Kadar et al., 2020). Thus, while social capital strengthens workers' resilience in the informal economy, there are tensions with class and gender structures that limit its optimisation. Social capital can bind workers in strong networks, but it is not fully able to penetrate entrenched structural boundaries, such as class inequality and gender workload imbalances. It is this tension that strengthens the sociological analysis in this study, and shows that the survival of MSME workers is not solely determined by their social networks, but also by their position in the broader social structure.

Theoretically, this research makes an important contribution to the development of studies in economic sociology and informal workers by explaining that the survival of individuals working in the informal sector depends not only on their access to economic capital but also on the social capital that exists in their daily lives. Utilising Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework on social capital, this study demonstrates that social networks based on familial relationships, local communities, and religious groups serve as resources that can be transformed into tangible economic, emotional, and social support. The findings enrich our understanding that, in marginalized and informal

economic situations, the power of community and social relationships is equally—and in some circumstances —more important than structural resources, such as financial institutions or government assistance programs. Practically, the results of this study provide valuable insights for the development of social and economic policies that are more supportive of informal workers, especially in traditional MSME sectors such as the *komplang* cracker industry. Local governments, MSME support agencies, and civil society organisations can use the results of this study as a basis for designing community-based interventions that strengthen social solidarity and expand local support networks. In addition, this research could also encourage small businesses to adopt collective and participatory approaches to labour management, thereby improving workers' welfare more sustainably. Thus, this research not only contributes to the academic field, but also has a real practical impact in supporting the empowerment of workers in the informal sector in Indonesia.

This research is important because it provides an in-depth insight into the social and economic realities faced by workers in the informal sector, particularly for the *kerupuk komplang* MSMEs in Bengkulu City. In the context of low-income, economically vulnerable communities, how individuals or families survive are inextricably linked to the power of social networks and the reciprocal relationships that surround them. This research demonstrates that social capital plays a crucial role as an alternative resource to address economic challenges, filling the gap left by formal institutions that are often absent or inadequate in providing support to these groups.

In addition, the significance of this research is also seen in its contribution to enriching the understanding of economic sociology, especially in explaining how local social structures influence the economic strategies of small communities. By focusing on the context of community-based MSMEs, this research demonstrates that economic resilience is influenced not only by individual capabilities but also by the collective strength built through strong social relations. In the face of social change and emerging economic challenges, the findings from this study can serve as a foundation for policymakers, academics, and local development actors to formulate more humane and community-based intervention strategies. Therefore, this research is fundamental not only from an academic perspective but also practically to strengthen the social and economic resilience of the lower-class communities in Indonesia.

## CONCLUSION

This study found that workers in kerupuk komplang MSMEs in Bengkulu employ various coping mechanisms to address economic challenges, including low income and job instability. These include job variation, reduced expenditure, and support from family, neighbours, and the surrounding community. Social networks play a crucial role in helping individuals fulfill their basic needs, particularly in overcoming limited access to formal economic resources. This phenomenon reveals that workers' survival strategies are not individualised, but depend heavily on the strength of social relationships that have formed in their daily lives. From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the strengthening of economic and industrial sociological studies, particularly in understanding the dynamics of work in the informal sector. By referring to Pierre Bourdieu's social capital theory, this research reveals that social capital, including networks of trust, norms of reciprocity, and community solidarity, can be transformed into economic, symbolic, and cultural capital that supports the survival of workers. The findings enrich the sociological literature from the perspective that social power at the local level plays a crucial role in overcoming the structural limitations faced by lower-class workers. Practically, the results of this study provide a basis for developing socio-economic policies that support workers in the informal sector. The local government and related institutions can utilise this to design empowerment programs that focus on the strengths of local communities, rather than relying solely on the formal economic information approach. This research can also serve as a reference for MSME players in developing a more comprehensive work system that prioritises workers' welfare. Thus, the survival strategy of MSME workers can be seen as a form of social resilience that requires structural and institutional support.

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