

Resilience Communication of Micro-Enterprise Actors in the Service Sector Affected by COVID-19 in Depok, West Java

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ABSTRACT :

Micro businesses are essential to national economic development by generating jobs, increasing income, and reducing poverty. The Covid-19 pandemic had a severe impact, especially on micro businesses in the service sector, with restrictions causing reduced consumer demand and business closures, including in Depok, West Java. Effective communication was critical for their resilience, enabling quick response, accurate information, marketing adaptation, customer engagement, network strengthening, collaboration, and innovation. This research aims to analyze the communication practices of micro business actors in the service sector affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in Depok, West Java. Using a qualitative approach with an interpretive paradigm, the study employed interviews and observations, applying communication theories from Betts and Buzzanell in an economic context. Findings reveal the importance of effective communication processes for micro business resilience during crises. Key sources of information and discussion for these businesses during the pandemic included micro business communities, family and friends or colleagues, and social media.

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INTRODUCTION

Micro businesses are part of MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises). At the end of 2019, a new disease emerged which is known globally as Covid-19. In March 2020, this disease entered Indonesia and had a significant impact on the entire economic structure, including service sector micro businesses. During the Covid-19 pandemic, they are very vulnerable because owners often lack resources for business continuity.

To minimize the spread and transmission of the virus, the Indonesian government implemented Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) in areas with high mortality rates and significant spread (Minister of Health Regulation Number 9 of 2020) and physical restrictions and PPKM (Community Activity Restrictions) to prevent the spread of the virus. breaking the chain of transmission of Covid-19 (Kemkominfo, 2020). This large-scale activity restriction has had a severe negative impact on many aspects, especially social and economic aspects. These impacts include psychological problems due to the monotony and boredom of staying at home which can lead to mental health problems. In addition, increasing unemployment has led to an increase in criminal activity, and economic conditions have worsened due to the cessation of most economic activities (Mawar et al, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic is not only a health disaster, but also causes chaos and multi-sectoral impacts, where almost all sectors, including the economy, are very badly affected.

The Ministry of Finance's study explains that apart from weakening domestic economic activity such as reduced consumption and purchasing power, decreased production and financial performance, as well as threats to banking and other financial sectors, there are also threats to the sustainability of MSMEs (Masruroh et al, 2021). Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises have an important role and make a significant contribution to national development. They are the backbone of the national economy by creating jobs and increasing people's income thereby reducing poverty (Nalini, 2021). Even during the 1998 crisis, MSMEs were known to be the driving force of economic growth. From 2014 to 2019, the number of MSMEs increased to almost 68 million, with the largest portion being small and medium enterprises (Lokadata, 2019). The involvement of micro businesses contributes significantly to Indonesia's development, in line with the 2020-2024 National Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMN) and the vision of the President and Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia (BAPPENAS, 2019).

Micro businesses, as small businesses with limited resources, face various challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery period, such as decreased sales, supply disruptions, changes in consumer behavior, and restrictions on business activities. These restrictions have a significant impact on their ability to manage their income, resulting in business closures or employee reductions, thereby increasing unemployment and poverty due to decreasing family income (Komara et al, 2020). Many micro entrepreneurs only rely on their business income to meet their daily needs, so they have no choice but to try to keep their business going. In Depok, West Java, the first area in Indonesia where COVID-19 was identified, the impact on micro businesses was enormous due to the government's adaptation of behavior and policies to minimize transmission of the virus.

Micro-entrepreneurs who are facing a decline in consumer demand and a decline in income are experiencing psychological pressure, anxiety and uncertainty regarding the sustainability of their business in the future, including micro-entrepreneurs in the service sector such as beauty salons, stove services, workshops and others. The role of service sector micro entrepreneurs in maintaining business growth during the pandemic is very important

and requires resilience. To overcome the difficulties caused by Covid-19, micro entrepreneurs in Depok are carrying out a resilience communication process.

Agustina et al. (2021) explains that overcoming each problem correctly is the key to whether micro-entrepreneurs can survive in uncertain conditions such as the COVID-19 crisis. Coutu (2002) states that resilient individuals have three defining characteristics: they calmly accept harsh realities, have extraordinary improvisation skills, and are satisfied with what they have. Apart from having strong individuals, the right strategy is also needed to maintain the resilience of micro entrepreneurs.

Various literature acknowledges the importance of communication for MSMEs, especially micro businesses, to remain resilient. This includes activities to optimize productivity through discussions for exchanging information, sharing problems, and overcoming challenges, leading to better understanding and management skills, establishing standard operating procedures (SOPs), and simple financial record-keeping (Anggarani et al, 2021). Apart from that, Kumala and Junaidi (2020) highlighted MSMEs' appreciation of tax incentive policies and the use of these incentives to increase tax compliance. Another role of communication can be seen in the research of Agustina et al. (2019) regarding the importance of outreach on halal product certification for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) which involves socialization and assistance with online registration. Setini (2021) shows that knowledge sharing can mediate the relationship between social capital and performance, encouraging innovation to meet market demand.

Efforts to reduce stress, anxiety and worry, or resolve problems related to ongoing business operations due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, will most likely require communication interactions as a means of finding solutions. Buzzanell (2010) argues that the phenomenon of individual resilience, whether inherent or not, is developed, maintained and nurtured through discourse, interaction and material development. This can be interpreted as a communication process of resilience in recovery and reintegration efforts.

Based on the phenomenon above, it can be interpreted that communication processes and messages are very important for micro entrepreneurs in their efforts to be resilient during the pandemic and recovery period to find solutions to uncertainty and rapid change, reliable and accurate information, emotional support, adaptation in the digital environment, and recovery and rebuilding. Overall, resilience communication plays an important role in maintaining emotional balance, providing accurate information, overcoming challenges, and facilitating adaptation due to the impact of covid-19. The role of communication in resilience efforts for micro businesses affected by the Covid-19 pandemic contributes positively to building economic independence and helping stabilize the national economy.

Communication can play an important role in overcoming the problem of resilience among micro entrepreneurs, especially in the service sector, including communication made to the government and mass media such as print, electronic and online media (Dewi 2022; Farhan & Sunuantari 2023;). From the explanation above, this research formulates the problem as follows: "How does the communication process for the resilience of micro entrepreneurs

affected by the COVID-19 pandemic function, and how do they remain resilient in facing problems that arise in their business due to COVID-19?"

The research subjects were micro entrepreneurs in Tapos Village, Depok City, and West Java. This research focuses on the process of communicating the resilience of service sector micro entrepreneurs affected by COVID-19 through their business owners, based on the Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR) in an economic context for business resilience according to the scale of the micro business. This research is a development communication study. Development communication is a communication activity or process that contains development messages which aim to increase the knowledge, welfare and freedom of individuals or community members to live a decent and sustainable life until old age, or improve systems in institutions, organizations and government for the better. dynamic, productive, effective and efficient structure. In essence, development communication is knowledge sharing aimed at achieving consensus on actions that consider the interests, needs and capacities of all parties. Communication media in the development context are generally used to support development initiatives by spreading messages that encourage society to support development-oriented projects (Servaes 2008).

Development communication is intended to consciously improve human development. This means communication that will eliminate poverty, unemployment and injustice. In a narrow sense, development communication includes all efforts, methods and techniques for conveying development ideas and skills from those who initiate development to the wider community. Pragmatically, development communication can be formulated as communication carried out to implement a country's development plans (Harun and Ardianto, 2011). This research examines the resilience of service sector micro entrepreneurs in Depok in the context of using communication as a means of resilience. The purpose of communication is to instill ideas, mental attitudes, and teach skills needed by developing countries (Harun and Ardianto, 2011). Wilkins et al. (2014) added that development involves interventions for social change, integrating critical research with wise practice towards social justice.

The study of resilience communication among micro entrepreneurs in facing uncertainty and the dynamics of business continuity will be viewed through Betts and Buzzanell's (2022) resilience theory in the terminology of economic resilience. Communication of resilience through Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR) by Buzzanell (Wilson et al, 2021) conceptualizes resilience as "a constitutive process in which people reintegrate and actively build their new normal through language, interaction, networks, and attention to identity and identification." Buzzanell's resilience communication process consists of five interrelated processes, which are then complemented by one more process (Hintz et al, 2021). Betts and Buzzanell (2022) reframe the six processes in relation to economic resilience, namely: (1) mitigating adverse impacts; (2) articulating values; (3) recognizing entanglements; (5) evaluating (in) action.

Resilience refers to the ability of an individual or system to confront, adapt, and recover from stress, challenges, or adverse changes. It plays a crucial role in navigating difficult situations by enabling individuals to withstand pressure, adjust to new circumstances, and

regain stability after disruptions. This capacity is not merely about enduring hardship but also about learning and growing from challenges, ultimately leading to long-term well-being and sustainability. In general, resilience encompasses a combination of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes that work together to maintain stability and effective functioning despite setbacks. Several key factors contribute to resilience, including mental toughness, adaptive flexibility, social support, and positive attitudes (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Masten, 2018). These factors collectively help individuals and systems develop strategies to mitigate the impact of adversity and maintain a sense of control.

One of the primary components of resilience is mental toughness, which involves the ability to manage and cope with pressure, stress, or trauma in a constructive and healthy manner. Individuals with high mental toughness exhibit confidence, emotional regulation, and perseverance, allowing them to remain focused and composed even in the face of significant obstacles. This trait enables them to stay motivated, make rational decisions, and maintain productivity during periods of uncertainty or crisis.

Mental toughness includes a strong understanding of oneself, including strengths, weaknesses, and personal values. (b) Adaptive Flexibility. Resilience involves the ability to adapt to change and overcome challenges effectively. This includes the ability to change, adjust plans, and find alternative solutions when situations become difficult or unexpected. (c) Social Support. Support from family, friends and community is critical in building and maintaining resilience. Feeling supported and connected to a caring individual can help a person overcome difficulties and recover from challenging situations. (d) Positive Attitude. Resilience also involves a positive mental attitude. This includes self-confidence, optimistic expectations, the ability to look for positive aspects in every situation and focus on solutions rather than problems. Communication resilience is the ability of an individual or group to adapt and recover from difficult or high-pressure situations by using effective communication strategies. Resilient communication involves overcoming communication barriers and challenges, building strong relationships, and managing conflict constructively in stressful situations.

Based on an adaptation from Betts and Buzzanell (2022), the communication process in resilience communication can be structured into the following five elements (1) Building Normalcy, with the application of economics to mitigate adverse impacts, described as impact reduction. (2) Affirming Identity Anchors, with the application of economics in articulating values, is described as reflecting value assumptions. (3) Maintaining Communication Networks, with the economic application of recognizing ties, is described as eliminating socio-economic differences. (4) Using Alternative Logic, with the application of economics to investigate alternatives, described as considering various response options. (5) Emphasizing Productive Action, with the economic application of evaluating (in) action, is described as rejecting action as failure. (6) Rejecting the Status Quo, with the implementation of an economy that embraces transformation, is described as a re-evaluation of goals.

In addition, based on the adaptation of Betts and Buzzanell (2022), the process of economic resilience communication can be categorized into six distinct forms, each

representing a different approach to navigating financial challenges and uncertainties. These forms highlight the various ways individuals, businesses, and communities communicate strategies for maintaining stability, adapting to changes, and overcoming economic adversity. By understanding these different communication processes, stakeholders can develop more effective responses to financial disruptions, ensuring long-term sustainability and resilience. The following section provides a detailed breakdown of these six forms as follows:

Table 1. Resilience Communication Process Summary

Communication Process	Description
Mitigating Harm Communication	Work to reduce impacts
Articulate Communication Values	Reflects value assumptions
Acknowledging Communication Entanglement	Eliminating socio-economic differences
Investigating Alternatives Communication	Consider various response options
Evaluating (In)Action Communication	Reject inaction as failure
Embrace Transformational Communication	Reevaluate goals

Source: adapted from Betts and Buzzanell (2022)

The role of communication in urban areas is very broad and involves various aspects of life. With effective communication, suburban areas can become more connected, inclusive and sustainable places for their residents. Community communication in suburban areas in Indonesia tends to be different from communication in rural areas. Suburban areas in Indonesia are generally characterized by more advanced infrastructure and technological developments, dense populations, and social and cultural diversity. This influences the communication patterns and styles that occur among suburban communities. These communication patterns and styles can be seen from the following phenomena: (1) Social media. The development of technology and the internet has changed the way urban communities communicate. Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp have become important tools for interacting and sharing information. Urban people often use social media to communicate with friends, family and neighbors, as well as follow the latest news and trends. (2) Mobile phone.

The use of mobile phones or smartphones is very widespread among suburban communities. People use mobile phones to communicate via voice calls, text messages and instant messaging applications. Mobile phones are also used to access the internet, browse social media, and participate in online communities. (3) Face to Face Communication. Even though digital communication is increasingly popular, face-to-face communication remains important in people's daily lives. Direct meetings between individuals or groups still occur in various contexts such as workplaces, schools, shopping centers and other public places. These face-to-face interactions may involve informal conversations, business discussions, or social activities. (4) Public Transportation. Urban areas in Indonesia are often traversed by busy public transportation systems such as buses, trains and other public transportation. Communication between passengers and between passengers and drivers is commonplace. For example,

passengers sharing information about arrival times or discussing routes and destinations. (5) Community and Organization. Urban areas provide a rich environment for various communities and organizations. Urban communities are often involved in social organizations, interest groups, sports clubs, and other special interest groups. Communication in this context is usually carried out through regular meetings, online discussion groups, or through special applications. (6) Language and Culture. Urban areas in Indonesia have linguistic and cultural diversity. Communication between individuals often involves the use of Indonesian as a commonly understood language but can also involve the use of regional or foreign languages depending on the context and community. Urban culture also influences communication styles, where more informal, fast-paced and multitasking contexts can be found.

Regarding communication among urban communities in Indonesia, it is important to remember that communication experiences and patterns can vary between individuals and groups. Social, cultural, economic, and demographic factors can influence how people communicate with each other in urban areas. Sudarto (2021) stated that the development of micro businesses is basically the joint responsibility of all stakeholders. The targets in developing and empowering micro businesses are: (1) Increasing human resource competencies and fostering an entrepreneurial spirit by enhancing the expertise and skills of micro and small business owners; (2) Expanding access to financial institutions; (3) improving product quality, by referring to SNI; (4) Increasing wider access to information; (5) Increasing and developing knowledge and technology; (6) Increasing product quality; (7) Establish partnerships with related parties.

Microenterprises may need to overcome language challenges, where customers from different cultural backgrounds may have varying mother tongues. In addition, different cultural norms can also influence the way micro businesses communicate with customers and business partners. For example, business practices that are well accepted in one culture may be considered rude or inappropriate in another culture. Utilizing government assistance and support is also important for micro business actors in their efforts to seek assistance and support from government programs or financial institutions to overcome financial difficulties caused by the pandemic. Another important thing is training and increasing skills for micro businesses to use the time during the pandemic to develop new skills or improve skills in certain fields that can help their business.

These coping actions help micro businesses in urban areas to survive and adapt to the changes brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, each microbusiness may take different steps depending on the type of business, available resources, and local environmental conditions. Thus, to be able to develop MSME business activities, efforts need to be made (LPPI 2015) such as: (1) easy access to capital; (2) infrastructure development assistance; (3) business scale development; (4) development of business networks, marketing and partnerships; (5) human resource development; (6) increasing access to technology; (7) creating a more conducive business climate.

Resilience communication has a very important role in development. It is a communications approach that focuses on building the capabilities of individuals,

communities, and organizations to confront, adapt, and recover from unexpected changes or crises. In the development context, resilience communication plays a major role in building and strengthening social, economic and environmental resilience.

The communicative theory of resilience is basically based on messages, d/Discourse and narratives. It is recognized that "negative" emotions, their expression in interactional and mediated forms, and organizing processes can act as contributors to individual/group well-being as well as catalysts for social change (Coutu 2002; Held 2004). This section is about finding out what resilience looks like in different contexts. Cultivating resilience incorporates stories, memories, routines, and rituals about how people not only persist despite loss and suffering but also actively shape and frame these experiences (Buzzanell, 2018). Sumardjo (2012) revealed that communication as one of the main social processes is a process of disseminating information into the social system, which can influence changes that occur in the elements of goals, feelings, beliefs and in turn will also influence the elements of norms/values, sanctions, as well as status, positions and roles, as well as power in the social system.

In addition, resilient communication also involves the ability to build and maintain strong and mutually supportive relationships. This involves the ability to collaborate, build trust, and show empathy for others. Good communication in a resilient relationship can resolve conflict in a constructive way, manage differences of opinion, and build joint solutions.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research design employed an interpretive paradigm with data collection through semi-structured interviews and in-depth observations. The informants were six micro-business owners in the service sector in Depok, West Java, who had been running their businesses since before the COVID-19 pandemic and were still operational at the time of the study. Each informant is referred to by their initials and the nature of their micro-business as follows: FA (micro-business for stove repair), AB (micro-business for electronics repair), EN (laundry business), DN (micro-business as a private tutor). The collected data were analyzed using a six-point economic resilience communication process adapted from Betts and Buzzanell (2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research found that both institutions and micro-business actors used communication strategies to survive the Covid-19 pandemic. These included marketing communication, capital assistance information, and identifying consumer targets, as summarized in Table 2. The study was analyzed qualitatively within the context of resilience communication. Interviews and observations revealed that service sector micro-businesses adapted by following government guidance and taking initiatives, such as wearing masks to maintain customer trust. Their strong motivation to sustain their businesses stemmed from the need to support their families and the belief that loyal customers would continue to engage with them.

Table 2 Resilience Communication Process carried out by informants during the Covid-19 pandemics

Communi- cation process and informant	Mitigating Harm Communication	Articulating Values Communication	Acknowledging Entanglement Communication	Investigating Alternatives Communication	Evaluating (In)Action Communication	Embracing Transformation Communication.
FA (Stove Repair Micro-Business)	"I once received information about spare parts and events from a government institution and educational activities about the best tools for stoves."	"Keep trying to promote products and services through social media"	"I attend events organized by the local government."	"During the pandemic, I surrendered to the situation, just what consumers had"	"I like to evaluate the number of additional consumers"	"Search for solutions to consumer problems with families"
AB (Electronics Repair Micro-Business)	"At the start of the pandemic, I still offered it to customers who already use me"	"Be trying hard to keep up the service business because of family"	"During a pandemic, people often look for solutions by looking at information on electronic and social media"	Try to find new things, for example asking more experienced friends	When conditions worsen, he communicates persistently to evaluate and seek solutions to the lack of alternative actions	I modern communication media as transformative means to solve his problems.
EN (Laundry Micro-Business):	"I wear a mask when serving customers so that they will be confident of cleanliness"	"I wear a mask when serving customers so that they will be confident of cleanliness"	Actively seeks solutions and communicates on social media, using WhatsApp groups as a promotional tool, in addition to creating and distributing printed flyers.	Uses strong communication to explore alternative solutions.	"I will keep selling to feed my family and maybe consumers will come back little by little"	"I want to sell well, it just depends on my luck"
DN (Education_Private Micro-Business)	"I look for information through television and social media regarding my business to keep it running."	"I am more confident if I get a satisfactory response from consumers"	"Soften gather with community groups, because there may be information about their children who want to study"	I provide alternative payment processes that make things easier for consumers	I just let it flow depending on the situation	I just let it flow depending on the situation

In the Acknowledging Entanglement Communication process, micro-business actors collaborated and promoted their services to government institutions and business associations. Meanwhile, in the Investigating Alternatives Communication process, they sought alternative solutions through social media, personal networks, and customer feedback, as formal training programs tended to focus more on the culinary industry rather than the service sector.

In addition, micro business actors also create informal networks to share information and experiences with each other. Through word-of-mouth or social media groups, they exchange ideas, strategies, and insights on overcoming challenges. These peer-to-peer connections provide valuable advice and solutions that may not be available through formal institutions. These networks also foster a sense of community, helping business owners feel less isolated. This collaborative approach shows the importance of adaptability and resourcefulness, enabling micro businesses to innovate and survive during uncertain times.

The next process is Evaluating (In) Action Communication. This process aims to analyze how micro business actors adapt to the activity restrictions imposed by the government to maintain their business resilience. The data collected during this process shows that micro business actors continue to comply with mask-wearing regulations, and while waiting for conditions to improve, they develop strategies to calculate and target potential consumers temporarily. In the Embracing Transformation Communication process, micro business actors adapt their marketing through social media platforms such as WhatsApp and other applications. However, whether these adaptation efforts have been effective has not been thoroughly evaluated in a well-planned manner, even though this is crucial for ensuring better business resilience.

CONCLUSION

The government, micro-business communities, educational institutions, families, friends, consumers, and social media all play a role in the resilience efforts of micro businesses in the service sector. The role of the government in supporting the resilience of micro businesses in the service sector has not been fully optimized across all resilience communication processes. This is a significant concern because the government has the capacity to maximize resilience communication during crises through policies and regular information for the public. Additionally, the limited role of micro-business associations, private companies, and non-governmental organizations also contributes to the challenges of these resilience efforts. The above conclusion should be of particular concern to the administrators of this country (Indonesia), that their people still need guidance and motivation to overcome their life problems. If Indonesia aims to improve its citizens' quality-of-life index and the dynamics of its business sector, the government-particularly local governments-must raise awareness that communication, in all its forms, can empower people to build resilience in facing emerging challenges, specifically regarding the Covid-19 pandemic.

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