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Impact of Multidimensional Social Ties on Economic Well-Being Among MSMEs: The Moderating Role of Social Environment in the Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

Background: Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a vital role in economic development, particularly in emerging economies such as Indonesia. However, many MSMEs struggle to achieve sustainable economic well-being amid rapid digital transformation. This study examines the impact of multidimensional social ties—bonding, bridging, and linking—on MSMEs' economic well-being and investigates the moderating role of social environment in the digital era. A quantitative approach was employed using a cross-sectional survey of 312 MSME owners.
Method: Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to evaluate both measurement and structural models, including moderation effects. Economic well-being was conceptualized as a multidimensional construct comprising income stability, financial security, and subjective well-being, while social environment was operationalized through digitalization, locality, and community support.
Results: The findings demonstrate that all dimensions of social ties significantly influence economic well-being, with bridging social ties exhibiting the strongest effect. Furthermore, the social environment significantly moderates these relationships, strengthening the impact of social ties under favorable digital and community conditions.
Conclusion: This study contributes to the literature by advancing social capital theory through a multidimensional and context-dependent perspective. Practically, the findings provide strategic insights for policymakers and MSME stakeholders to enhance resilience by strengthening social networks and improving digital and institutional ecosystems.

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INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a pivotal role in sustaining economic stability and inclusive growth, particularly in emerging economies such as Indonesia. The sector contributes more than 60% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and absorbs approximately 97% of the total workforce, making it a fundamental pillar of economic resilience and social welfare (Aprilia et al., 2024; Shohibboniawan Wahyudi et al., 2024). Beyond their economic contribution, MSMEs also function as a social safety net, especially in rural and underserved areas, where access to formal employment opportunities remains limited. However, despite their substantial contribution, MSMEs face persistent structural challenges, including limited access to finance, low technological adoption, and vulnerability to external shocks (Avordeh et al., 2024; Thelma Chibueze, 2022).

The ongoing digital transformation introduces both opportunities and complexities for MSMEs. While the digital economy in Indonesia is rapidly expanding, with significant growth in e-commerce and digital financial services, only a fraction of MSMEs have successfully integrated digital technologies into their business processes (Hardi et al., 2026; Santoso et al., 2025). This uneven adoption reflects the existence of a digital divide, particularly between urban and rural areas, which affects the ability of MSMEs to compete and sustain economic performance. In this context, traditional economic resources alone are insufficient to explain variations in MSME performance (Amalia et al., 2025; Morris et al., 2022). Instead, intangible assets such as social capital, particularly social ties, have emerged as critical determinants of economic well-being.

Social capital theory emphasizes that networks of relationships provide access to valuable resources, including information, support, and opportunities. However, contemporary research suggests that social ties should not be treated as a unidimensional construct (Jääskeläinen et al., 2023; Saleh et al., 2026). Rather, they consist of multiple dimensions—bonding, bridging, and linking ties—each playing distinct roles in shaping economic outcomes. Bonding ties provide emotional and immediate support, enabling business survival, while bridging ties facilitate access to new information and market opportunities (Kopren & Westlund, 2021; Rashidfarokhi et al., 2026; S. Zhang et al., 2011). Linking ties, on the other hand, connect entrepreneurs with formal institutions, enabling access to financial resources and policy support. The interplay of these multidimensional social ties becomes increasingly important in the digital era, where networks extend beyond physical boundaries (Stein et al., 2026; J. A. Zhang et al., 2025).

At the same time, economic well-being among MSMEs is a multidimensional concept that extends beyond income or profitability. It encompasses income stability, financial security, and subjective perceptions of economic satisfaction (Saptono et al., 2024; Stephens et al., 2025). In highly dynamic and uncertain environments, such as the current digital landscape, these dimensions are influenced not only by business performance but also by the entrepreneur's ability to adapt to technological and market changes. Therefore, understanding economic well-being requires a more comprehensive perspective that integrates both objective and subjective indicators (Hanoum et al., 2025; Kim & Jin, 2024).

Despite growing interest in the role of social ties, existing studies have largely focused on their direct effects on performance, with limited attention to the contextual factors that shape these relationships. In particular, the role of the social environment—such as digitalization, locality (urban versus rural contexts), and community support—remains underexplored (Klerkx et al., 2019; F. Lu & Yoon, 2025; X. Lu et al., 2025). The social environment may act as a critical moderating factor that strengthens or weakens the effectiveness of social ties in enhancing economic well-being. For instance, digital environments can amplify bridging ties through online platforms, while strong community support may reinforce bonding ties. Conversely, limited digital infrastructure or weak institutional support may constrain the benefits derived from social networks (Bindeeba et al., 2026; Klerkx et al., 2019; Kumar et al., 2025).

Furthermore, prior research often overlooks the complexity of interactions between different dimensions of social ties and the broader socio-digital context. This gap is particularly relevant in emerging economies, where structural inequalities, cultural norms, and digital disparities intersect to shape entrepreneurial outcomes. As MSMEs navigate the transition toward a digital and increasingly interconnected economy, it becomes essential to examine how multidimensional social ties interact with diverse social environments to influence economic well-being (Stoyanov & Stoyanova, 2025).

Therefore, this study aims to examine the impact of multidimensional social ties—bonding, bridging, and linking—on the economic well-being of MSMEs. In addition, it investigates the moderating role of social environment in the digital era, particularly in terms of digitalization, locality, and community support. By integrating a multidimensional perspective of both social ties and economic well-being, this study contributes to the advancement of social capital theory and provides practical insights for policymakers and practitioners in enhancing MSME resilience and sustainability in the digital age.

METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between multidimensional social ties and economic well-being among MSMEs, as well as the moderating role of social environment in the digital era. A cross-sectional survey approach is employed, where data are collected at a single point in time from MSME owners. To analyze the proposed model, this study utilizes Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This method is appropriate due to its ability to handle complex models involving multiple latent constructs, moderation effects, and non-normal data distributions (Al-shami et al., 2024; Nurachmad et al., 2025).

This study employs a structured quantitative research design framework aligned with PLS-SEM to examine the relationships among variables. The process begins with problem identification and literature review, followed by the development of a conceptual framework and research hypotheses. Measurement instruments are then designed, and data are collected from MSME owners and subjected to preprocessing. The analysis consists of measurement model evaluation to assess validity and reliability, and structural model evaluation to test hypotheses. Moderation analysis is further conducted to examine the interaction effect of social environment. The overall research process is illustrated in Figure 1.

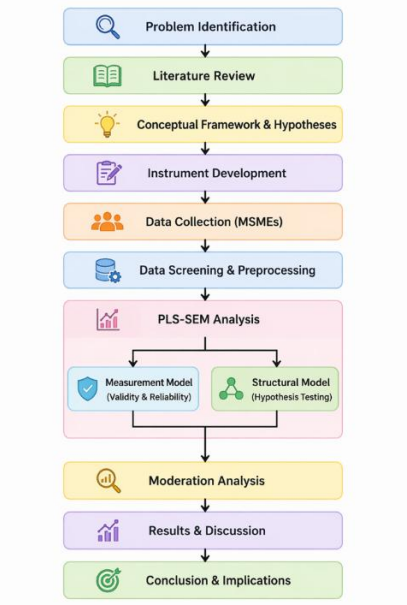

Figure 1. Research Design Framework

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

A total of 312 MSME owners participated in this study. The respondents represent diverse business characteristics in terms of gender, business size, operational experience, and geographical location. The detailed demographic profile is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	168	53.8%
	Female	144	46.2%

Business Type	Micro	198	63.5%
	Small	86	27.6%
	Medium	28	9.0%
Business Age	< 3 years	102	32.7%
	3–5 years	124	39.7%
	> 5 years	86	27.6%
Location	Urban	182	58.3%
	Rural	130	41.7%

The data indicate that the majority of respondents are micro-enterprises, reflecting the actual structure of MSMEs in emerging economies. Additionally, the relatively balanced distribution between urban and rural businesses provides a suitable basis for analyzing locality effects.

Measurement Model Evaluation

1. Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was assessed using outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). As presented in Table 2, all indicator loadings exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating strong indicator reliability. Furthermore, all AVE values are above 0.50, confirming that each construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators.

Table 2. Outer Loadings and AVE

Construct	Indicator	Loading	AVE
Bonding	BST1	0.82	0.64
	BST2	0.79	
	BST3	0.81	
Bridging	BRT1	0.86	0.68
	BRT2	0.84	
	BRT3	0.83	
Linking	LKT1	0.80	0.65
	LKT2	0.82	
	LKT3	0.79	
Economic Well-being	EWB1	0.88	0.70
	EWB2	0.86	
	EWB3	0.84	

These results confirm that the measurement model satisfies the criteria for convergent validity.

2. Reliability Analysis

Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). As shown in Table 3, all constructs exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency.

Table 3. Reliability Results

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Bonding	0.83	0.89
Bridging	0.85	0.90
Linking	0.81	0.88
Economic Well-being	0.87	0.91

These findings demonstrate that all constructs are reliable and suitable for further analysis.

3. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT). As shown in Table 4, all values are below the threshold of 0.90, confirming that each construct is empirically distinct.

Table 4. HTMT Values

Construct Pair	HTMT Value
Bonding–Bridging	0.74
Bonding–Linking	0.69
Bridging–Linking	0.76
Bonding–EWB	0.71
Bridging–EWB	0.78
Linking–EWB	0.73

Thus, discriminant validity is established.

4. Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model was evaluated to examine the relationships between multidimensional social ties and economic well-being, as well as to assess the predictive capability of the proposed model. The evaluation includes collinearity assessment, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and hypothesis testing using bootstrapping. Collinearity diagnostics were first conducted using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The results indicate that all VIF values are below the threshold of 3.0, suggesting that multicollinearity is not a concern and that each predictor construct contributes uniquely to the model. The explanatory power of the model was assessed using the coefficient of determination (R^2).

The R^2 value for Economic Well-being is 0.63, indicating that 63% of the variance in economic well-being is explained by bonding, bridging, and linking social ties. This value can be categorized as substantial, reflecting strong explanatory capability of the model. To further evaluate the contribution of each predictor, effect size (f^2) was examined. The results show that bridging social ties have the strongest effect ($f^2 = 0.18$), followed by linking social ties ($f^2 = 0.11$) and bonding social ties ($f^2 = 0.08$).

This indicates that while all dimensions are important, bridging ties play a more dominant role in influencing economic outcomes. The predictive relevance of the model was assessed using the blindfolding procedure. The Q^2 value for Economic Well-being is 0.41, which is greater than zero, confirming that the model has strong predictive relevance and is capable of predicting endogenous constructs effectively. Hypothesis testing was conducted using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. The results indicate that all hypothesized relationships are positive and statistically significant. Specifically, bonding social ties have a significant effect on economic well-being ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.01$), followed by linking social ties ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$), and bridging social ties, which exhibit the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$). The structural relationships among constructs are illustrated in Figure 2.

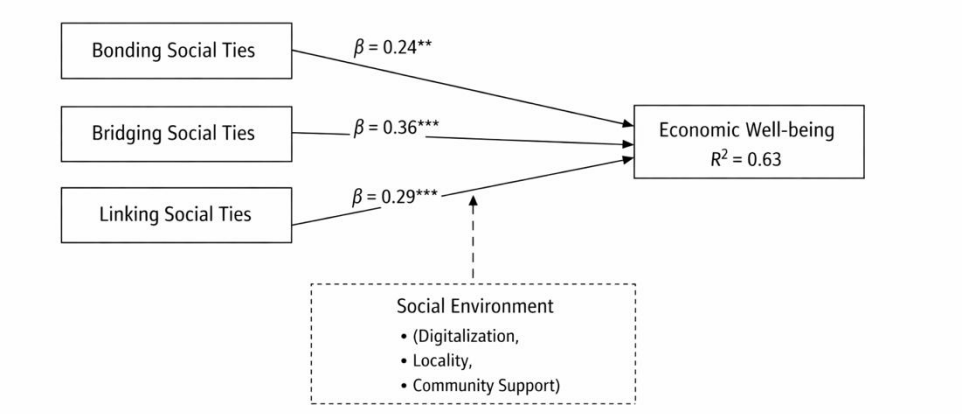

Figure 2. Structural Model Results (PLS-SEM Path Model)

As shown in Figure 2, bridging social ties exhibit the strongest effect on economic well-being, followed by linking and bonding social ties. This finding highlights the importance of diverse and externally oriented networks in enhancing MSMEs' economic performance, particularly in the digital era.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide strong evidence that multidimensional social ties play a crucial role in shaping MSMEs' economic well-being. Among the three dimensions, bridging social ties emerge as the most influential, indicating that access to diverse networks, external knowledge, and broader market opportunities is particularly critical in the digital era. This finding supports the "strength of weak ties" theory, which emphasizes the importance of heterogeneous connections in facilitating innovation and information diffusion. While bonding social ties contribute to business resilience through emotional and immediate support, their impact is relatively weaker compared to bridging ties.

This suggests that reliance solely on close-knit networks may limit exposure to new opportunities and hinder growth potential. Similarly, linking social ties play a significant role in enabling access to institutional resources, such as financial services and government programs, highlighting the importance of vertical relationships in supporting MSME development. Importantly, the results reveal that the effectiveness of social ties is highly contingent upon the surrounding social environment. Digitalization enhances the value of bridging ties by expanding network reach beyond geographical boundaries, while strong community support reinforces bonding ties through trust and cooperation. These findings indicate that social capital does not operate in isolation but is embedded within broader socio-digital contexts.

Furthermore, the differences observed between urban and rural settings suggest that locality influences the extent to which MSMEs can leverage digital networks. MSMEs in urban areas tend to benefit more from digital connectivity, whereas those in rural areas may face constraints due to limited infrastructure. This highlights the persistent digital divide and its implications for inclusive economic development. Overall, this study extends social capital theory by demonstrating that the impact of social ties is multidimensional and context-dependent. In the digital era, the ability to integrate diverse networks with supportive environments becomes a key determinant of sustainable economic well-being among MSMEs.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the impact of multidimensional social ties—bonding, bridging, and linking on the economic well-being of MSMEs, as well as the moderating role of social environment in the digital era. Using a PLS-SEM approach, the findings provide several important insights. First, the results confirm that all dimensions of social ties have a significant positive effect on economic well-being. Among these, bridging social ties exhibit the strongest influence, highlighting the importance of diverse networks in accessing new information, opportunities, and markets. Bonding social ties contribute to business stability through emotional and immediate support, while linking social ties facilitate access to institutional resources such as financing and government programs. Second, the study demonstrates that the social environment plays a significant moderating role in strengthening the relationship between social ties and economic well-being. Digital environments enhance the effectiveness of bridging ties, while community support reinforces bonding ties.

Additionally, differences in locality suggest that MSMEs in urban areas benefit more from digital connectivity compared to those in rural areas. Overall, these findings emphasize that economic well-being among MSMEs is not solely determined by internal business capabilities, but also by the ability to leverage multidimensional social networks within supportive social environments. The study contributes to social capital theory by integrating multidimensional constructs and highlighting the contextual role of digital-era environments.

From a practical perspective, the findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and MSME stakeholders. For MSME owners: Strengthening bridging networks is essential to access broader markets and digital opportunities. Entrepreneurs should actively engage in diverse communities and digital platforms. For policymakers: There is a need to enhance digital infrastructure and reduce disparities between urban and rural areas. Policies should also support networking programs that facilitate collaboration between MSMEs and institutions. For support institutions: Financial institutions and business development organizations should strengthen linking social capital by improving access to funding, training, and mentorship programs.

This study contributes to the literature by advancing social capital theory through a multidimensional perspective of social ties. Unlike prior studies that treat social capital as a unidimensional construct, this research demonstrates that bonding, bridging, and linking ties play distinct yet complementary roles in shaping economic well-being. Furthermore, the inclusion of social environment as a moderating variable provides a deeper understanding of how contextual factors influence the effectiveness of social capital, particularly in the digital era.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the use of cross-sectional data limits the ability to capture dynamic changes over time. Future studies may adopt longitudinal approaches to better understand causal relationships. Second, the study focuses on MSMEs within a specific national context, which may limit generalizability. Future research could conduct cross-country comparisons to validate the findings. Additionally, future studies may explore mediating variables such as innovation capability or digital literacy to further explain the relationship between social ties and economic well-being. Expanding the model to include additional contextual factors may also provide deeper insights into MSME sustainability in the digital era.

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