



Leveraging Business Flexibility: Does It Impact on Business Resilience for Dealing with Covid-19 Crisis?

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ABSTRACT- The COVID 19 pandemic has resulted in SMEs experiencing an ongoing crisis. However, UKM tries to stay afloat and tries to avoid layoffs. This study is to measure the resilience of SMEs as SMEs which are considered the foundation of the Indonesian economy and to determine the factors used to survive this pandemic. This study involves 299 SMEs located in North Sumatra using quantitative and qualitative methodologies and will answer questions about (1) Can SMEs face the crisis due to the COVID 19 pandemic; (2) What factors cause SMEs to survive. Data analysis will be carried out using the Structural Equation Model and SmartPLS version 3. The results of this study will show a comprehensive diagnosis of the resilience of SME in Northern Sumatra and can show the relationship between business flexibility, collaborative capability, and pro-social behaviour.

Keywords: business flexibility, business resilience, collaborative capability, pro-social behaviour

I. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 case that hit the rest of the world was a case of a multidimensional pandemic, as it impacted many sectors of people's lives. one of them is the economic sector. If in some cases an economic recession in previous years, small-medium enterprise (SMEs) was able to be a stronghold but was different from this case of the Covid-19 pandemic. Most SMEs experience uncertain turmoil and even some are completely paralyzed. It is same with (Verma & Gustafsson, 2020) revealed that the Covid-19 pandemic exerted adverse effects because it seemed as if the world economy was stifled this was in stark contrast to the impact posed by the 1998 monetary crisis.

The economic turmoil in the United States is that there is a break-up of labour relations of more than 40% and 43% of SMEs are in bankruptcy (Bartik et al., 2013). Similarly in Hanoi, that there was a decline in community income and consumption capabilities during this Covid-19 pandemic (Béné, 2020). In Indonesia itself, this paralysis of SMEs is evidenced by the presence of termination, declining public purchasing power, cancellation of flights, and decreased tourism figures from foreign tourists (Hanoatubun, 2016). Hence, then SMEs entrepreneurs need to think about new re-planning and innovation to overthrow the consequences posed from this Covid-19.

Aceh and North Sumatera are provinces located at the tip of Sumatera Island where the two provinces are closely related in supporting the economy of the community. Aceh has such limitations in meeting its people's needs that there are some staple needs that North Sumatera supports as an example is the availability of eggs that are only capable of being provided at 5% by local businessmen Aceh and the rest supplied from North Sumatera (Yudi, 2020). Similarly, it is the case with local Aceh products sent to Medan and various other regions to sustain the economy of Aceh (Humas Provinsi Aceh, 2020). However during the Covid-19 pandemic hit Indonesia, certainly, the economies' glory suffered obstacles. Moreover, there was a policy of the local government with the enactment of restrictions and the completeness examination of Covid-19 free documents on the North Aceh-Sumatera border.

So it can be said that this Covid-19 pandemic has shown an influence on the sustainability of SMEs in both of these Sumatera's tip provinces. Armed with this data it is necessary to be researched more closely regarding the flexibility of SME as one attempt to survive in the face of this Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Business Resilience

SME resilience is a strategy taken in response to crises (Hall & Beck, 2003). The adaptation of SMEs ability to survive or regain income levels before the disaster/crisis is also known as resilience (Danes et al., 2009, p. 336). (Rouse, 2014) defines SME resilience, namely the ability of an organization to adapt quickly / swiftly to all forms of disruption while maintaining the business to be sustainable and protecting workers, assets and equity. So it can be concluded that the resilience of SMEs is the success of organizational adaptation in passing crisis/disruption by protecting all existing systems to be consistent and continuous in doing business.

The results of the research by Branicki, Sullivan-Taylor, & Livschitz (2018, p. 1257) reveal that the ability of SMEs to withstand external shocks is influenced by the attributes of entrepreneurial resilience (SME Resilience Mechanisms), and organizational resilience (Organizational Resilient).). The most defining aspect of SME resilience is the ability to detect, prevent, and adapt to threats and maintain business continuity (Kativhu, Mwale, & Francis, 2018, p. 218). So it takes skills in making decisions and determining the right strategy to overcome the disruption or crisis that hit the company.

A framework with an optimization approach can be used to analyze supply chain behaviour with stages of adaptation, digitization, readiness, recovery, ripple effects, and sustainability during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Queiroz, Ivanov, Dolgui, & Wamba, 2020). The coopetition system (simultaneous cooperation and competition) can be used to influence the performance of SMEs but it cannot be predicted how the marketing strategy will be during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis (Crick &Crick, 2020, p. 205). Business resilience is measured in two (2) aspects, namely company resilience (capability to scope, adaptation, and reconfiguration) and a growing economic environment (Soroka, Bristow, Naim, & Purvis, 2020, p. 838). So it takes innovation and independence for SMEs to decide and choose which model or approach is right to use to survive the COVID-19 pandemic.

Business Flexibility

Flexibility is needed when companies/organizations experience unexpected shocks, such as in the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Company inflexibility or flexibility can give birth to many alternatives or innovations in dealing with threats. This is in line with the opinion of Jain, Kashiramka, & Jain (2020); Sushil (2017) which explains that business flexibility is the company's ability to adjust to volatile or uncertain circumstances.

Uncertainty in doing business is influenced by many factors, such as the research results of Sumiati, Rofiq, & Pramono (2019) that market orientation is influenced by four (4) factors, namely internal environmental, external environmental, strategic flexibility and strategic planning. Libert, Beck, & Jerry (2016) offer four (4) business models that can be used so that SMEs can adapt to all possibilities, namely asset builders, service providers, technology creators, and network orchestrators. A previous empirical study involving 213 Indian manufacturing organizations found that organizational flexibility played a moderating role in the relationship between data analytics capability on supply chain resilience (Dubey et al., 2019). Based on this empirical fact, this paper supposes to examine the impact of business flexibility on business resilience

H₁: Business flexibility impacts on business resilience

Collaborative Capability

Collaboration is a creative process that is carried out together to interact to create understanding and skills to complement each other (Dalkir, 2011). Currently, the community has a sense of connection by promoting moral values and cross-cultural agreements to jointly address and adapt globally to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, which is ideal and effective (Wolf, Haddock, Manstead, & Maio, 2020). So the ability to collaborate is also needed in running a SMEs business because each business certainly has different competitive advantages.

A sustainable competitive advantage requires knowledge building and network management to be based on mutual trust, communication, and commitment as an integrative concept (Blomqvist, Kirsimarja; Levy, Blomqvist, & Levy, 2006; Saputra, 2020).

Previous empirical study digital platform capabilities are positively moderated in relational governance and negatively moderated informal governance, and simultaneously influence Collaborative Innovative Capability (Wang, Zhao, Chi, & Li, 2016). Based on this empirical fact, this paper supposes to examine the impact of collaborative capability on business resilience

H₂: Collaborative Capability impacts on business resilience on business resilience

Pro-Social Behavior

Prosocial behaviour can be defined as a person's sense of empathy to care and be willing to help others. So that the steps that can be taken to take action are to pay attention to each event, then be able to interpret whether the situation/event is an ordinary or emergency, if the situation is an emergency, it is hoped that a sense of responsibility will be formed and have sufficient knowledge/ability to empathize with help. other people.

Pro-social behaviour is influenced by factors from individuals such as perceptions of responsibility, interpersonal skills, and organization (Xin, Pei, Chenjie, Xiaotian, & Aimei, 2020). An indication that people who are prosocial at least use a mask and have a sense of empathy for others (Betsch et al., 2020, p. 2). So prosocial behaviour is voluntary behaviour that aims to help, share, benefit each other, and provide comfort to others. Instead of prosocial behaviour, this is done with material rewards but is based on moral values and concern for others. Likewise, SMEs players in operating their businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic to encourage their members to always wear masks and develop empathy among members and support each other.

Prosocial leadership is motivated by interpersonal skills and empathy resulting in altruistic behaviour (Ewest, 2017). Altruism is an internal motivation that gives birth to helpful behaviour and the desire to do good without paying attention to rewards for the welfare of others. So a prosocial leader has a dedication that is private and subjective. China is the country with the lowest category in behaviour or a conscious willingness to help others (Ding et al., 2018).

Previous empirical study Good leadership is positively related to High-Performance Work Systems, furthermore, leadership and High-Performance Work Systems affect the performance of SMEs which are fully mediated by employee psychological empowerment and customer service behaviour (Chumphong & Potipiroon, 2019).

H₃: prosocial behaviour impact on business resilience

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Material and Method

This paper was based on a quantitative study of small-medium enterprises in the second biggest island in the world – Sumatera island in Indonesia. Sumatera is divided into 10 provincial territories. There are two provinces in the northern part of Sumatera. Those are Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam and Sumatera Utara. Data was collected by distributing the digital questionnaires in social media to a professional network of the researchers. The researches come from three universities: Universitas Medan Area (Medan, Sumatera Utara), Universitas Bina Nusantara (Jakarta), and Institut Agama Islam Negeri Langsa (Aceh). This paper involved 124 the owners and/or managers of small-medium enterprises as respondents in Northern Sumatera. Most of them are men (56%). Their ages are below 40 years old with a diploma and a bachelor's degree as educational background. They are the owner and also the manager of their own business (49%) with micro-scale of business size (70%). They are running their business in Aceh (45%) and Sumatera Utara (55%). Table 1 explains more detail about the respondent profile.

Table 1 Profile of Respondents

Profile of Respondents				
Gender	Man	69	56%	56%
	Women	55	44%	100%
Age	20 – 29	26	21%	21%
	30 – 39	41	33%	54%
	40 – 49	36	29%	83%
	50 – 59	16	13%	96%
	> 59	5	4%	100%
Education	Basic Education	37	30%	30%
	Diploma	12	10%	40%
	Bachelor	61	49%	89%
	Master	14	11%	100%
Business Role	Owner	37	30%	30%
	Owner and Manager	61	49%	79%
	Manager	26	21%	100%
Business Scale	Micro Business	87	70%	70%
	Small Business	27	22%	92%
	Medium Business	10	8%	100%
Location	Aceh	56	45%	45%
	North Sumatera	68	55%	100%

This paper used the principles of partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM, variance-based SEM) and SmartPLS version 3 application as the statistic tool for testing the research model. The research model is consist of four variables in the first order construct. The constructs were adapted from the previous studies:

- Business resilience was measured with the BRES construct. The construct was adapted from Korber and McNaughton (2018) and Chowdhury, Quaddus, and Agarwal (2019). BRES was reflected in nine indicators (BR01, BR02, BR03, BR04, BR05, BR06, BR07, BR08, BR09).
- Business flexibility was measured by BFLX construct. The construct was adapted from PIVOT concept with developed by Libert, Beck, and Jerry, (2016). The construct is reflected into 14 indicators (BF01, BF02, BF03, BF04, BF05, BF06, BF07, BF08, BF09, BF10, BF11, BF12, BF13, BF14).
- The collaborative capability was measured with COLA construct. It was adapted from alliance capability which developed by Kohtamäki, Rabetino, and Möller (2018). COLA construct is reflected by eight indicators (CL01, CL02, CL03, CL04, CL05, CL06, CL07, CL08).
- Pro-social behaviour was measured by PROS construct which adapted from Ewest (2018) and Johnson, Tariq, and Baker (2018). The construct is reflected in four dimensions: *mind to share*, *togetherness*, *moral support*, and *financial support*. Figure 1 shows that pro-social behaviour construct is indicated by PROS with eight indicators (PR01, PR02, PR03, PR04, PR05, PR06, PR07, PR08).

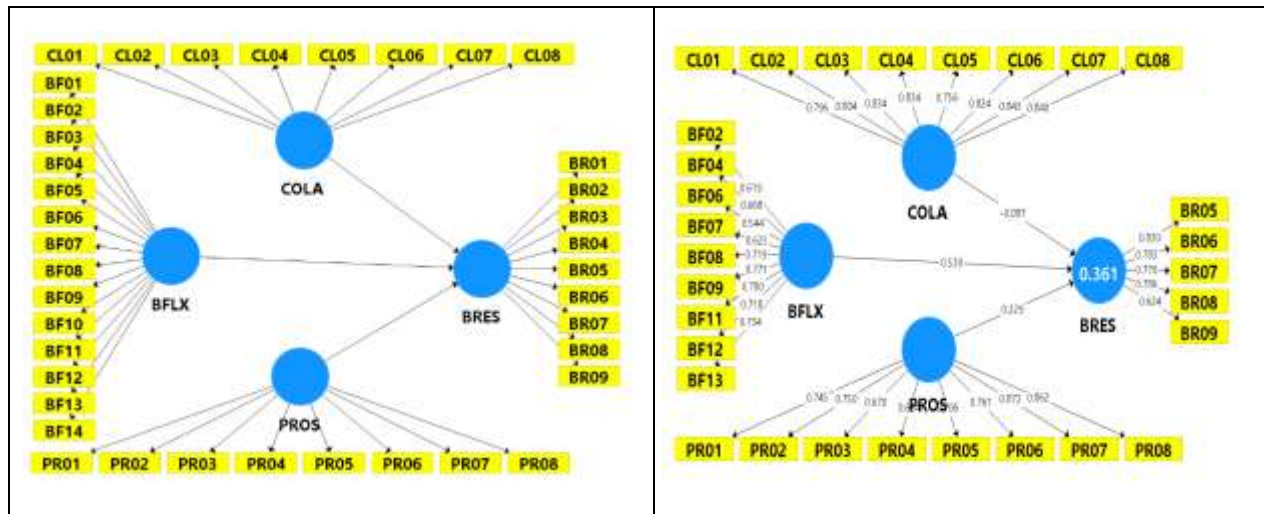


Figure 1 Developed and Tested Research Model

Figure 1 demonstrates the research model in two forms. The left side form is a developed research model which supports the developed hypothesizes and measured by the whole indicators. The right side is tested research model which was calculated by SmartPLS application for validity and reliability analysis

3.2 Validity and Reliability Analysis

Based on the collected data, the research model was tested. The first test is validity and reliability. Table 2 shows the parameter of validity and reliability (e.g. Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, Average Variance Extracted). Table 3 shows the result of discriminant validity. For the validity of indicator, this paper used Outer Loading score (OL). Only the indicator with OL scores more 0,6 is considered valid and keep in the model. Invalid indicators were excluded from the model. All indicators of Collaborative Capacity and Pro-Social Behavior are more than 0,60, they are all valid. Several indicators of Business Flexibility (BF01, BF03, BF05, BF10, BF14) and several indicators of Business Resilience (BR01, BR02, BR03, BR04) were less than 0,60 than excluded from the model.

The validity of the variable was indicated by AVE score (average variance extracted). The valid variables have AVE score more than 0,50. The AVE score of Business Resilience (0,507), Business Flexibility (0,508), Collaborative Capability (0,667) and Pro-Social Behavior (0,577) are more than 0,50. All variables of the research model are valid. Table 2 also indicates that all variables are discriminant valid too because the diagonal bold score (the squared root of AVE) was more than 0,70 and the high score in the column. Reliability of variables as indicated by Cronbach's alpha (CA) or Composite Reliability (CR) more than 0,70. Figure 2 shows that all variables have CA or CR more than 0,7 even more than 0,8. It means that all variables are reliable. Based on validity and reliability analysis, all variables and indicators of research model are valid and reliable.

Table 2 Validity and Reliability Analysis

Parameter	OL	CA	CR	AVE
BUSINESS RESILIENCE				
BR05	0,83	0,818	0,873	0,507
BR06	0,78			
BR07	0,77			
COLLABORATIVE CAPABILITY				
				0,8
CL01	0	0,929	0,941	0,667
CL02	0			
CL03	0,8			

Table 4 Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses	Path Coefficient	t-Statistics	p-Values	Conclusion
H1: Business Flexibility ==> Business Resilience	0,53	6,58	0,00	Accepted
H2: Collaborative Capability ==> Business Resilience	-0,08	0,74	0,46	Rejected
H3: Pro-Social Behavior ==> Business Resilience	0,25	2,11	0,03	Accepted

The PLS algorithm calculation dan hypothesizes testing explained that business resilience of SME in Northern Sumatera is about 36,1% influenced by business flexibility of the organization and pro-social behaviour of the owner. Organizational capability in changing business flexible by using digital technology and the owner's empathy on the personal life of employees are influential factors for making SME resilient during Covid-19 crisis. is also an influential factor.

The collaborative capability of SMEs does not influence on business resilience significantly. This finding drives us to make an extended research model by making three additional connection: (1) collaborative capability into business flexibility, (2) pro-social behaviour into collaborative capability, (3) pro-social behaviour into business flexibility. From these three additional connections, two connections are accepted statistically. Collaborative capability influences significantly business flexibility. Pro-social behaviour influences collaborative capability. Based on the extended research model, business resilience influenced directly by business flexibility and influenced indirectly by collaborative capability and pro-social behaviour. Pro-social behaviour influenced directly collaborative capability, then collaborative capability influenced directly business flexibility.

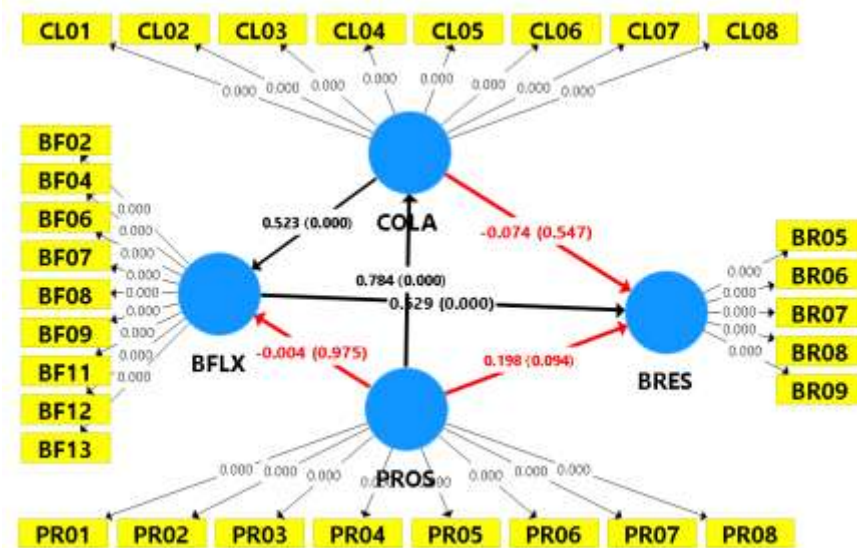


Figure 2 Extended Research Model

For making SME resilient in doing business during Covid-19 crisis; pro-social behaviour of the owner should be directed to develop collaborative capability and the collaborative capability should be directed to develop business flexibility. By doing business flexibly by using technology during Covid-19 crisis, the SMEs in Northern Sumatera will be more resilient.

This paper is an exploratory study that aims to explore, not confirm the theory. This study implies wishes to predict the structural model of business resilient and its influential factors. The sampling method used is convenience or purposive sampling which is non-probabilistic. The SEM model used is the first-order

construct. For future research, this paper recommends: (1) using a large size of the sample. More than 300 respondents from all districts in Aceh and Sumatera Utara, (2) using probabilistic sampling methods such as stratified random or cluster sampling, so that it can be used or become more relevant to make a generalized conclusion, (4) examining other constructs such as financial management capability, supply change agility, and Covid-19 protocol implementation in doing business.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Business resilience is a strategic issue for SMEs as an economic pillar in Northern Sumatera, Indonesia, especially during Covid-19 crisis. For strengthening SME resilience, pro-social behaviour of the SME's owners should be directed to impact on collaborative capability. Because collaborative capability will impact directly on business flexibility and then business flexibility will impact on business resilience.

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