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Adaptive Leadership Model of MSME Owners in Lampung in Facing Crises and Digital Disruption: Dynamic Capability and Resilient Leadership Approach

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Abstract: This study develops a contextual adaptive leadership model for MSME owners in Lampung navigating crises and digital disruption through dynamic capability and resilient leadership perspectives. Rapid technological change, shifting consumer behavior, cost pressure, and intensified platform competition require owner-managers to sense change, reconfigure scarce resources, and sustain employee commitment. A qualitative multiple-case design was applied to 18 MSME owners in Bandar Lampung, Metro City, Central Lampung, and Pringsewu, representing culinary, retail trade, fashion, agribusiness, and service sectors. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and documentation from August 2024 to January 2025 and analyzed using thematic analysis and cross-case comparison. The findings identify five integrated dimensions: environmental sensing, strategic agility, resilience orientation, collaborative empowerment, and digital transformation readiness. Environmental sensing enables early recognition of market and supply risks; strategic agility supports rapid adjustments in products, prices, suppliers, and sales channels; resilience orientation maintains emotional stability and cash discipline; collaborative empowerment mobilizes employee knowledge; and digital readiness converts platform adoption into market access and operating flexibility. Together, these dimensions constitute an owner-driven capability that strengthens business resilience and competitiveness. The study extends Dynamic Capability Theory by showing how sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring are enacted through owner leadership, while resilient leadership explains persistence and collective recovery under pressure. For Lampung, the model supports targeted programs combining crisis decision-making, employee empowerment, digital analytics, and sector-based mentoring rather than financing assistance alone.

Keywords: Adaptive Leadership, MSMEs, Dynamic Capability, Resilient Leadership, Digital Transformation, Lampung.

INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are business entities that play a strategic role in employment creation, poverty reduction, local economic growth, and national economic

resilience. MSMEs are generally characterized by flexible business structures, limited capital, owner-centered management systems, and high sensitivity to environmental changes (Tambunan, 2023). In developing countries, MSMEs become the dominant form of enterprise and function as the backbone of economic activity. In Indonesia, MSMEs contribute significantly to gross domestic product and absorb the majority of the labor force, making them a crucial sector in maintaining inclusive economic growth (World Bank, 2024).

Leadership in MSMEs differs from leadership in large corporations because decision-making authority is highly centralized in the owner. The owner commonly acts simultaneously as strategic planner, operational manager, marketer, and human resource controller. Therefore, business continuity and organizational adaptability are strongly determined by the owner's capacity to influence employees, interpret uncertainty, and align limited resources with changing priorities (Northouse, 2021; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). In uncertain environments, conventional leadership approaches are often insufficient because MSME leaders must make rapid decisions, reallocate scarce resources, motivate workers, and redesign business strategies under pressure.

Adaptive leadership refers to the ability of leaders to respond effectively to changing environments, mobilize people during uncertainty, encourage learning, and implement strategic adjustments based on emerging conditions (Heifetz et al., 2009). It emphasizes flexibility, collaborative problem solving, experimentation, and the capacity to distinguish technical problems from adaptive challenges. Dynamic Capability Theory further explains that organizations survive turbulent environments when leaders are able to sense environmental change, seize emerging opportunities, and reconfigure internal resources quickly (Teece, 2018). A resilient leadership perspective adds the capacity to maintain direction, restore confidence, and support continuity during disruption. Indonesian evidence indicates that crisis leadership can strengthen innovation capability and business continuity mechanisms (Kurniawan et al., 2024). Together, these perspectives provide a comprehensive lens for explaining how MSME owners interpret change, mobilize employees, and reconfigure limited resources.

At present, MSMEs face two major pressures simultaneously: economic crisis risk and digital disruption. Rising raw material prices, inflationary pressure, unstable consumer purchasing power, and supply uncertainty increase operating vulnerability, while e-commerce platforms, digital payments, social media marketing, and data-driven competition alter how customers discover and evaluate products (International Labour Organization, 2024; OECD, 2024). Digital adoption is also shaped by organizational factors such as owner support, human resources, digital culture, trading-partner pressure, and adoption costs (Faiz et al., 2024). MSMEs that fail to adapt leadership practices to these changes are more vulnerable to declining sales, employee turnover, and business closure.

In Indonesia, the strategic role of MSMEs continues to strengthen. Government data indicate that more than 30 million registered MSMEs were active in 2024, dominated by micro-scale enterprises. This figure reflects the importance of MSMEs as the main productive sector in Indonesia. Furthermore, national policy targeted 30 million MSMEs to enter the digital ecosystem through marketplace adoption, cashless payment systems, and online marketing channels (Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, 2024).

Table 1. Development of MSMEs and Digitalization in Indonesia

Indicator	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Registered MSMEs (million units)	28.9	29.6	30.2
MSMEs Connected to Digital Platforms (million units)	22.7	26.5	30.0
Contribution to Employment (%)	96.5	96.7	96.8

Source: Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs Republic of Indonesia (2024); processed by author.

Table 1 shows that the number of MSMEs and digital platform adoption in Indonesia during the 2022–2024 period experienced an upward trend. This increase indicates stronger entrepreneurial participation and wider acceptance of digital business systems. However, growth in digital adoption does not automatically guarantee stronger business competitiveness because many MSMEs still face managerial limitations, especially in leadership capability, workforce management, and strategic adaptation.

Lampung Province represents an important regional context for MSME development because its economy is supported by trade, agriculture-based products, culinary businesses, and local services. Economic growth in Lampung reached 4.57% in 2024, supported partly by productive community sectors including MSMEs (BPS Lampung, 2025). However, many MSMEs in Lampung still experience limited managerial modernization, dependence on traditional markets, and low strategic readiness to respond to crisis situations or digital competition.

Table 2. Main Challenges of MSMEs in Lampung

Challenge Dimension	Description	Leadership Implication
Market Uncertainty	Changing demand and consumer preferences	Fast decision making required
Digital Competition	Marketplace and online sellers increase rivalry	Innovation and digital adaptation needed
Human Resource Limitation	Small teams with multi-role workers	Motivational and collaborative leadership
Financial Pressure	Rising operational costs and cash flow constraints	Resource reconfiguration capability
Crisis Vulnerability	Supply disruption and economic shocks	Resilience leadership needed

Source: Processed from BPS Lampung (2025); field observations; Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs (2024).

Table 2 confirms that the challenges faced by MSMEs in Lampung are not merely financial or technological in nature, but also managerial and behavioral. In many cases, MSME failure is caused not only by external pressure, but by the inability of owners to transform leadership behavior according to environmental changes. Leaders who remain rigid, reactive, and intuition-based often struggle to sustain competitiveness in disruptive environments.

Recent Indonesian studies have linked MSME competitiveness and performance with market-based dynamic capabilities (Tarihoran et al., 2023), digital technology adoption (Faiz et al., 2024), omnichannel transformation (Febriani et al., 2025), digital literacy and human capital (Noerchoidah et al., 2025), innovation and digital IT capabilities (Probohudono et al., 2025), and digital culture and creativity (Rahman et al., 2025). These studies demonstrate the importance of organizational capabilities and technology, but they primarily explain adoption or performance relationships at the organizational level. Less attention has been paid to the owner-level leadership behaviors through which sensing, rapid reconfiguration, employee empowerment, and resilience are enacted in regional MSMEs, particularly in Lampung.

Accordingly, this study offers novelty by developing a contextual, owner-centered adaptive leadership model that integrates Dynamic Capability Theory, Adaptive Leadership

Theory, and a resilient leadership perspective. Rather than treating digitalization, agility, and resilience as separate organizational outcomes, the model explains how five interdependent leadership dimensions enable MSME owners in Lampung to recognize threats, mobilize people, reconfigure resources, and maintain business continuity. The study contributes theoretically to leadership and MSME literature and provides a practical diagnostic framework for government agencies, universities, and business development institutions.

Based on the above background, the following research questions were formulated: 1) How do MSME owners in Lampung interpret crisis and digital disruption?; 2) What adaptive leadership behaviors are applied by MSME owners in responding to uncertainty?; 3) How does leadership capability support business resilience and competitiveness?; 4) What contextual model of adaptive leadership can be developed for MSMEs in Lampung?.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a multiple-case study design to explore and formulate an adaptive leadership model of MSME owners in Lampung facing crises and digital disruption. A qualitative method was selected because adaptive leadership is a contextual, behavioral, and experience-based phenomenon that requires in-depth understanding from the perspective of business owners (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The multiple-case design enabled cross-case comparison and richer interpretation of leadership practices across different business sectors (Yin, 2018).

The research was conducted in several strategic areas of Lampung Province, including Bandar Lampung, Metro City, Lampung Tengah, and Pringsewu, where MSME activities are relatively concentrated. These areas represent diverse business characteristics ranging from urban trade-based enterprises to agriculture-linked and service-oriented MSMEs. The unit of analysis in this study was the owner-manager of MSMEs, considering that leadership authority in small businesses is generally centralized in the owner.

The informants consisted of 18 MSME owners selected using purposive sampling. Informants were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) operating the business for at least three years; (2) employing workers or managing small teams; (3) having experienced crisis conditions such as post-pandemic recovery, rising costs, or market decline; and (4) currently utilizing digital tools such as social media marketing, e-commerce platforms, digital payment systems, or online communication channels. The selected sectors included culinary businesses, fashion, retail trade, agribusiness, and service enterprises.

Primary data were collected from August 2024 to January 2025 through semi-structured in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation review. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and online, with each session lasting approximately 45-90 minutes. The interview guide focused on leadership responses to crisis situations, strategic decision-making, employee management, innovation behavior, business adaptation, and digital transformation experiences. Observations captured operational practices, owner-worker interaction, and technology utilization in the workplace. Supporting documents, including business records, promotional media, and digital-platform activities, were reviewed to strengthen data credibility. Informants were briefed on the purpose of the study, participated voluntarily, and were anonymized in the reporting of quotations.

Data analysis employed reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2021), involving data familiarization, initial coding, category development, theme construction, theme review, and interpretation. Coding was performed manually. The researchers first assigned descriptive and interpretive codes to meaningful interview segments, observation notes, and documents; grouped related codes into provisional categories; and then refined the categories into themes through repeated comparison across cases. Candidate themes were reviewed against the coded extracts and the complete dataset. Differences in interpretation were discussed

iteratively until the thematic boundaries and supporting evidence were agreed upon. Cross-case analysis was subsequently used to identify common leadership dimensions and contextual variations among sectors and locations.

To ensure trustworthiness, this study applied source and method triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, and reflexive documentation. Source triangulation compared information from owners in different sectors and locations, while method triangulation combined interviews, observations, and documentation. Member checking was conducted by reconfirming key interpretations with selected participants. To reduce researcher bias, reflexive journals were maintained throughout data collection and analysis to record assumptions, methodological decisions, and alternative interpretations. Preliminary codes and themes were also discussed with a peer who was not involved in data collection, and disagreements were resolved by returning to the empirical evidence.

The final output of this study is a contextual adaptive leadership model for MSME owners in Lampung that explains how owner-managers sense environmental changes, make strategic adjustments, empower workers, maintain resilience, and adopt digital transformation in uncertain environments. This model is expected to contribute to the development of Human Resource Management and small business leadership literature in emerging regional contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved 18 MSME owners in Lampung Province operating in culinary, retail trade, fashion, agribusiness, and service sectors. Informants were located in Bandar Lampung, Metro City, Lampung Tengah, and Pringsewu. All participants had operated their businesses for more than three years and had experienced at least one crisis episode, such as post-pandemic market decline, raw material price increases, labor shortages, or disruption from digital competitors. The diversity of sectors and business scale provided broad insight into leadership practices among MSME owners in dynamic environments.

Table 3. Profile of Informants

Category	Number	Percentage
Culinary	6	33.3%
Retail Trade	4	22.2%
Fashion	3	16.7%
Agribusiness	3	16.7%
Services	2	11.1%
Total	**18**	**100%**

Business Age	Number
3–5 Years	7
6–10 Years	6
>10 Years	5

The profile indicates that most informants were from the culinary and retail sectors, which are highly sensitive to consumer demand shifts and digital competition. This condition made them relevant cases for examining adaptive leadership behavior.

Main Crisis and Digital Challenges Faced by MSMEs in Lampung

Interview findings reveal that MSME owners experienced multiple pressures simultaneously. The most frequently mentioned issues were rising operational costs, declining offline customers, stronger online competition, employee turnover, and unstable supply chains.

Table 4. Major Challenges Reported by Informants

Challenge	Number of Informants Mentioning	Percentage
Rising raw material costs	15	83.3%
Declining direct/offline customers	14	77.8%
Competition from online sellers	13	72.2%
Difficulty retaining employees	10	55.6%
Supply chain disruption	9	50.0%
Limited digital capability	8	44.4%

Across the cases, cost pressure and channel disruption frequently occurred at the same time. Owners therefore described adjustment as a sequence of interrelated decisions involving prices, portions, product packages, suppliers, staffing, and sales channels rather than as a single response to one problem.

One culinary owner in Bandar Lampung stated:

"When ingredient prices increased almost every month, we had to redesign menu portions and pricing immediately. If we waited too long, losses would grow."

This statement reflects the urgency of adaptive leadership in turbulent environments.

Emergence of Adaptive Leadership Dimensions

Based on thematic analysis, five major dimensions of adaptive leadership were identified: environmental sensing, strategic agility, resilience orientation, collaborative empowerment, and digital transformation readiness. These themes consistently appeared across cases.

Environmental Sensing

Environmental sensing refers to the owner's ability to detect market changes, consumer behavior, competitor movement, and operational risks. Sixteen of eighteen informants actively monitored customer feedback, competitor promotions, and social media trends before making decisions.

Table 5. Environmental Sensing Practices

Practice	Informants
Monitoring competitor prices/promotions	14
Tracking customer preferences	16
Observing digital trends/social media	12
Reviewing daily sales patterns	15

Cross-case comparison showed that owners who combined daily sales review with customer feedback and competitor monitoring identified declining products or changing preferences earlier than owners who relied mainly on personal intuition. Environmental sensing was therefore expressed through simple but repeated information-gathering routines.

Strategic Agility

Strategic agility reflects the ability to rapidly modify products, pricing, sales channels, or operations. Fifteen informants stated that they had changed strategies within short periods due to crisis pressure.

Examples included:

1. switching from dine-in to online delivery
2. introducing low-cost product variants
3. bundling products
4. changing supplier networks

5. reallocating labor tasks

A retail owner in Metro explained:

"Previously we relied on store visitors, now 60% of sales come from WhatsApp orders and marketplace platforms."

The shift from store-based selling to hybrid channels illustrates strategic agility in practice. Owners did not merely add a digital channel; they also revised work allocation, customer-response routines, product packaging, and supplier arrangements to support the new channel.

Resilience Orientation

Resilience orientation refers to the ability of owners to remain optimistic, maintain emotional control, and continue operating despite prolonged pressure. Fourteen informants stated that psychological endurance was more important than capital during crisis periods.

Table 6. Indicators of Resilience Orientation

Indicator	Evidence from Informants
Emotional stability	Remained calm during declining sales
Persistence	Continued operations despite losses
Financial discipline	Tightened expenses and preserved cash
Hopefulness	Believed market would recover

These patterns show that resilience orientation was expressed through both psychological and financial routines. Owners combined emotional control and persistence with expense prioritization, cash preservation, and gradual recovery targets.

Collaborative Empowerment

Unlike traditional owner-centered control, adaptive owners increasingly involved employees in solving problems. Eleven informants delegated customer service decisions, product ideas, or promotional content to workers.

A fashion business owner in Pringsewu stated:

"Young employees understand TikTok trends better than me, so I let them handle content ideas."

Employee participation was most visible when owners acknowledged that workers possessed more current knowledge about customer preferences or digital content. Collaborative empowerment therefore involved selective delegation, operational trust, and the use of employee knowledge rather than a complete transfer of owner authority.

Digital Transformation Readiness

Digital readiness emerged as a critical leadership dimension. Fifteen informants had adopted at least one digital tool such as WhatsApp Business, Instagram marketing, QRIS payment, Tokopedia, Shopee, or Canva-based promotion.

Table 7. Digital Tools Used by MSMEs

Digital Tool	Users (n=18)
WhatsApp Business	16
Instagram Marketing	14
QRIS Payment	13
Marketplace Platform	11
TikTok Promotion	8
Bookkeeping Apps	5

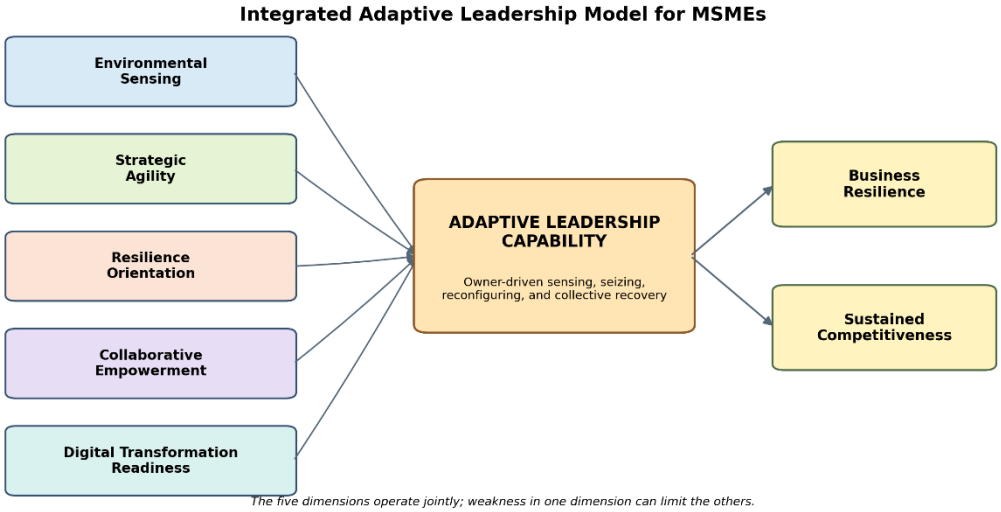
Although adoption increased, many owners reported limited use of digital analytics and customer data. This distinction indicates that digital readiness exists on a continuum: some MSMEs used platforms only for communication and transactions, while others began integrating digital information into product, promotion, and channel decisions.

The cross-case synthesis indicated that owners who combined environmental sensing, strategic agility, resilience orientation, collaborative empowerment, and digital readiness described faster adjustments and more stable access to customers. By contrast, owners with weaker sensing or digital capability tended to respond after sales had already declined and used digital tools mainly for transactions. Because the evidence is qualitative, this pattern should be interpreted as an observed association rather than a causal effect.

Proposed Adaptive Leadership Model for MSMEs in Lampung

Based on cross-case synthesis, the proposed model consists of five mutually reinforcing leadership dimensions that form an owner-driven adaptive leadership capability and support business resilience and sustained competitiveness.

Figure 1. Proposed Adaptive Leadership Model for MSMEs in Lampung



The model proposes that the five dimensions must operate jointly. Sensing provides information, agility converts information into action, resilience sustains effort during pressure, empowerment mobilizes employee knowledge, and digital readiness expands the speed and reach of adaptation**.**

Discussion

Owner-Driven Dynamic Capability

The five dimensions indicate that adaptive leadership is the behavioral mechanism through which dynamic capabilities become operational in small firms. Environmental sensing corresponds to sensing; strategic agility and digital readiness support seizing; and rapid changes in suppliers, work roles, products, and channels represent reconfiguration. This interpretation is consistent with Tarihoran et al. (2023), who found that market-based resources, capabilities, and knowledge shape MSME dynamic capability, and with Febriani et al. (2025), who showed that omnichannel transformation depends on sector-specific sensing, seizing, and transforming. The present study extends these findings by locating the mechanism in owner behavior: in resource-constrained firms, capability development is initiated less by formal systems than by the owner's routines for monitoring, deciding, and reallocating resources.

Resilient and Collaborative Leadership Under Crisis

Resilience orientation and collaborative empowerment broaden the dynamic capability explanation by showing how owners sustain action under pressure. Emotional stability, cash discipline, persistence, and employee involvement enabled firms to continue experimenting instead of freezing or withdrawing. This aligns with Adaptive Leadership Theory's emphasis on mobilizing people and learning through uncertainty (Heifetz et al., 2009) and with Kurniawan et al. (2024), who linked crisis leadership to innovation capability and business continuity. Unlike studies centered on formal continuity systems, the Lampung cases show that resilience in MSMEs is embedded in everyday owner decisions, informal communication, and selective delegation.

Digital Readiness and Human Capital

Digital transformation readiness was not equivalent to owning a social media account or using QRIS. The cases distinguished operational adoption from strategic use: many firms used digital tools for transactions, while fewer analyzed customer data or integrated channels. This distinction supports Faiz et al. (2024), who identified top-management support, human resources, and digital culture as key adoption determinants; Noerchoidah et al. (2025), who connected digital literacy knowledge sharing and human capital with MSME sustainability; and Rahman et al. (2025), who showed that digital culture and creativity underpin digital competitive advantage. It also complements Probohudono et al. (2025), whose findings position innovation and digital IT capabilities as pathways linking strategy to MSME performance.

Theoretical Contribution of the Contextual Model

Taken together, the model proposes that adaptive MSME leadership is an integrated owner-driven capability rather than a single leadership style or trait. Environmental sensing without agility may produce awareness without action; agility without resilience may be difficult to sustain; digital tools without empowerment may remain transactional; and resilience without sensing may prolong an obsolete strategy. The theoretical contribution is therefore the integration of Dynamic Capability Theory, Adaptive Leadership Theory, and a resilient leadership perspective into a five-dimensional model suited to regional MSMEs. The cross-case pattern suggests, but does not causally establish, that firms combining these dimensions respond more quickly and maintain broader customer access than firms applying them selectively.

Practical Implications

For provincial and district policymakers, MSME development programs should combine financial support with a leadership-capability diagnosis based on the five dimensions identified in this study. Training should use sector-specific crisis simulations and practical assignments covering environmental scanning, rapid pricing and supplier decisions, cash-flow discipline, employee delegation, digital customer analytics, and the integration of online and offline channels. Capability assessment before and after training would allow assistance to be tailored to the owner's weakest dimension.

Universities and business incubators should provide longer-term mentoring rather than one-off digital workshops. Mentors can help owners translate platform data into decisions, establish simple crisis dashboards, conduct after-action reviews, and create employee roles for content, customer service, and digital bookkeeping. Peer-learning groups across culinary, retail, fashion, agribusiness, and service sectors would also enable owners to exchange locally relevant adaptation practices.

CONCLUSION

This study formulated a contextual adaptive leadership model for MSME owners in Lampung facing crises and digital disruption. The qualitative evidence from 18 owners across culinary, retail trade, fashion, agribusiness, and service sectors identifies five interdependent dimensions: environmental sensing, strategic agility, resilience orientation, collaborative empowerment, and digital transformation readiness. Together, these dimensions explain how owner-managers recognize environmental change, make rapid strategic adjustments, sustain operations under pressure, mobilize employee knowledge, and use digital tools to maintain market access.

The cross-case evidence suggests that owners who combined the five dimensions were able to adjust products, prices, suppliers, work roles, and sales channels more rapidly than owners who relied mainly on intuition or used digital tools only transactionally. This comparison supports the conclusion that leadership capability is an important strategic intangible asset, while avoiding the claim that leadership alone determines business success. Theoretically, the model extends Dynamic Capability Theory by showing that sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring in MSMEs are enacted through owner behavior; it also incorporates adaptive and resilient leadership mechanisms that sustain learning, confidence, and collective action during disruption.

Practically, the findings indicate that MSME policy in Lampung should move beyond stand-alone financing or basic platform-adoption programs. Government agencies, universities, and business incubators should combine crisis decision-making, cash-flow resilience, employee empowerment, digital analytics, and sector-based mentoring. The five dimensions can also be used as a diagnostic framework to identify which leadership capabilities require priority development for each MSME owner.

This study is limited by its qualitative design, the involvement of only 18 informants, purposive selection, and concentration in four areas of Lampung; consequently, the findings are analytically transferable but not statistically generalizable to all Indonesian MSMEs. Self-reported accounts may also emphasize successful adaptations more than failed or abandoned responses. Future research should develop and validate a quantitative instrument based on the five dimensions and test its predictive validity for financial performance, digital-sales growth, employee retention, and business survival using structural equation modeling with at least 300 MSMEs across several Sumatran provinces. A longitudinal or mixed-method design is also recommended to examine whether changes in adaptive leadership precede improvements in resilience and performance over time.

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