



# Urban Informal Sector Workers during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Indonesia: Social Networking as a Strategy for Business Sustainability

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## Abstract

*Around 60,5% of workers in Indonesia rely on the informal sector, and in mid of 2020 almost half of them were in urban areas. The urban informal sector workers commonly are in small enterprises with low productivity, low liquidity, and negligible capital accumulation. They engage in street vending, home-based work, waste picking, domestic jobs, and other short-term contracts, and they do not enjoy workers' benefits and social protection programs, thus they are vulnerable to shock, including Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic does not only bring negative impact on the health sector, but it has also triggered an economic downturn. In terms of urban informal sector activities, various social policies (PSBB, Java-Bali PPKM, Emergency PPKM and Micro PPKM) sharply reduce the economic opportunities for informal economy workers who rely to a large extent on the personal contact with customers. Job losses and decreased income have been experienced by the majority of informal sector workers. This condition has to be overcome with various strategies to be able to maintain the continuity of their economic activities. This article discusses the strategies of urban informal sector workers to maintain sustainable livelihoods during the COVID-19 pandemic. The strategy carried out is focused on the use of social networks. The data used for writing this article is sourced from primary data. Data was collected using a qualitative approach in Bekasi Timur sub-district, Bekasi City, West Java Province. In addition, the article also uses the existing data related to the issued being studied.*

*Keywords: urban informal, workers, social networking, business sustainability.*

## Introduction

Indonesia has entered the third wave of Covid-19 and the government has reiterated its social distancing

policy. The pandemic still continue to affect the lives of hundreds of millions of people throughout Indonesia. In addition to the health impact,

the pandemic has also triggered an economic downturn, because there are regulations that restrict people's movement and economic activity. To overcome the spread of the virus, the government through the Ministry of Health issued Regulation of the Minister of Health Number 9 Year 2020 regarding Guidelines for Large-Scale Social Restrictions in Accelerating Coping with COVID-19 (Ministry of Health 2020). In line with the curve of the population exposed to COVID-19, social and physical restrictions have also changed to a transitional PSBB and the current policy is the Enforcement of Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM). Currently (March 2022), the Indonesian government is still implementing the Micro PPKM policy in the whole district with different levels depending on the severity of the population exposed to the virus and the impact it causes. The social restriction measures affect the population, including the informal sector to engage their all activities. In fact, the percentage of Indonesian workers involve in informal sector was higher than that of the formal sector.

In August 2020, the proportion of Indonesian workers in the informal sector\* reached to 77,67 million people

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\* The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) measures the informal sector workers by combination between who status and occupation. The informal sector workers are those who are self-employed without assistance, casual workers in agriculture and non-agriculture who do not hold professional positions, leadership staff, and administrative staff; and those whose business status is assisted by workers are not paid by the type

(60.47 percent) (BPS, 2020a) of the total working force (128.45 million) (BPS, 2020b). Among them, 44.27% live in urban areas. The urban informal sector workers are dominated by those who work in the business of providing food and beverages, transportation and warehousing; and trade (Rahman, A.Z.D. Kusuma, and H. Arfyanto, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic is forcing people to limit their mobility because of human-to-human transmission of the virus. The government has been implementing policy of maintaining physical and social distance (PSBB and PPKM). However, it is difficult for urban informal workers to totally follow the regulation. If informal workers stay at home, the basic living needs of the family will be disrupted or even unfulfilled, while working outside the home faces the risk of contracting COVID-19. The choice between starvation due to disrupted livelihoods and the risk of contracting the virus is a real dilemma faced by informal workers (ILO, 2020b). The live of Informal workers depend on daily income, small-scale, low-income, and not covered by employment and social protection (Consultative Group to Assist the Poor-CGAP, 2020:2, Guild, 2020; Pitoyo, B. Aditya, and I.Amri, 2020). These characteristics of work result in low and erratic incomes. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the income of informal

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of work of agricultural business workers.

workers that they usually get every day is reduced or even temporarily does not earn any income at all. The work from home (WFH) policy in the formal sector and reduced mobility of people, for example, have resulted in a decrease in the income of informal sector workers. This sector is losing a lot of people who become consumers of their products or use their services.

Research in the Special Region of Yogyakarta shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the tourism and education sectors to stop or reduce their activities which have an impact on the difficulty of informal workers who depend on these two sectors (Bagus. P, et al, 2020), so that the decline in income is inevitable. The decline in income has a further impact on the continuity of work. It is not easy for informal workers to be able to maintain the continuity of their work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, experience shows that informal sector workers tend to easily change their type of business when facing a shock, for example during the 1998 economic crisis (Pitoyo, 2007). The government of Indonesia is taking several measures to curtail the spread of the virus as well as to address the issues and challenges of the informal workers. However, with such a large population and over 60% of workforce in informal sector, it is a humongous task.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also given rise to various strategies

to survive and maintain livelihoods, various strategies carried out by informal workers. Using social networks, agents and collective organizing to sustain livelihoods is a strategy used by most of the urban informal sector workers (Bhanet al., 2020). Social networks are not only based on kinship, ethnic relations and friendship relations that have been widely known, but also social networks among informal sector workers in the form of organization ware (that is, using strong informal sector organizational facilities) and social ware (Istifhama, 2010). 2017). The various social networks that are maintained among informal sector workers are not only aimed at maintaining social relations but also in order to overcome economic problems in an effort to maintain the livelihoods of informal workers' families, even to build a survival strategy in overcoming the implementation of government regulations (Istifhama, 2017).

There have been many studies conducted in relation to the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the informal sector (such as.....). However, study that relates to the social networking that has important roles in relation to the business sustainability of informal sector work is very limited.

This article discusses the life of urban informal sector workers during the Covid-19 pandemic and strategies to maintain their work sustainability. The

question that arises include: What are the impacts of government policy with concerning the Covid-19 Pandemic on urban informal sector workers? How the informal sector workers can survive from the impact of the government policies to cope with Covid-19 Pandemic? What are the strategies being taken by informal workers to sustain their work activities?

## **Material and Methods**

This paper uses the data collected a qualitative approach with the use of open interviews with 13 informal workers from various occupational backgrounds, both male and female workers. All the informants live in Duren Jaya, Bekasi City. The selection of informants is carried out purposively, namely informal sector workers who have succeeded in carrying out strategies to survive in business continuity. Apart from this, the paper also uses secondary data from existing publications. The data then was analysed with the use of descriptive thematic analyses.

## **Social distancing restriction during Covid-19 and its impact on informal sector workers**

Covid-19 is an actively spreading pandemic in the whole globe and it is still continuing today. Covid-19 is respiratory viruses where transmission between individuals occurs primarily via aerosol droplets. Close contact

between individuals is required for transmission of the virus. Therefore, community activities outside the home or in crowds regulate large-scale policies including economic activities that are at risk of transmitting the corona virus. The most important thing in preventing the spread of the coronavirus today is reducing the mobility of the people from one place to another. In order to prevent the transmission of the virus, many countries have imposed measures that limit the flow of human mobility (Bajardi et al., 2011; Wang and Taylor, 2016; Charu et al., 2017). Various strategies are used to limit human mobility depending on the stage of the outbreak. In many countries where contagion has led to outbreaks with high number of cases, they have introduced population-wide physical distancing measures and movement restrictions to slow the spread and put in place other control measures (WHO, 2020). To prevent the transmission of the virus, governments around the world are more focused on managing population mobility, ranging from travel restrictions internationally and internally, ending mass gatherings, closing public spaces such as recreation centres, restaurants, pubs and clubs to closing schools, workplaces and in some places are on complete lockdown with people forced to stay indoors.

The Indonesian government has imposed several policies to handle Covid-19 through the Large-Scale

Social Restrictions Policy (PSBB), the Policy of Mikro Enforcement of Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM Java-Bali and Mikro PPKM). The PSBB rules are recorded in the Minister of Health Regulation Number 9 of 2020 and it implemented based on Government Regulation (PP) Number 21 of 2020 in the early stages of the pandemic. The PSBB was implemented from April 10 to June 4, 2020 in a number of cities and regencies with the high COVID-19 cases. The implementation of PSBB seem to decrease in the spread of Covid-19, for example in DKI Jakarta Province which is the epicentre of Covid-19 pandemic (Hikmahwati dkk, 2020). This success of the PSBB implementation in DKI Jakarta Province seems to be the basis for loosening social distancing restrictions across the country, even though the daily national Covid-19 cases have not shown a flattening curve. The social distancing restrictions were relaxed in the early of June to encourage economic recovery, known as the new normal policy, although the PSBB regulations was still applied. But since then, the rate of infection in Indonesia has been rising faster than in many neighbouring countries, pushing the government to tighten social restrictions again through the PPKM Java Bali, and the policy of Mikro PPKM that applied throughout the country.

The policies of social restriction have led to the closure of non-essential

businesses with negative outcomes on labour markets, but informal sector workers are among the groups most at risk of losing their jobs and incomes faced the most at risk of losing their jobs and incomes. (ILO, 2020a; Webb, McQuaid and S. Rand, 2020; Pitoyo et al, 2021). The ILO defines informal sector workers as individuals who are “not subject to national labour legislation, income taxation, social protection, or entitlement to certain employment benefits (Husmanns, 2004). By definition, they do not have secure employment contracts, and therefore usually do not enjoy workers’ benefits, social protection or workers’ representation. Because they are not recognized as legitimate by means of protection, and their work is usually not considered a “legitimate” economic activity, so they are called the grey economy (Tawab, 2017). Apart from unregulated aspect, the informal sector workers is often characterised by small or undefined workplaces, unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, low levels of skills and productivity, low or irregular incomes, long working hours and lack of access to information, markets, finance, training and technology (Schwettmann, 2020). The informal sector workers also tend to be marginalized, criminalized, and unrecognized on a daily basis Tawab, 2017). As a result, the informal sector workers are more vulnerable to various types of shocks, including the Covid-

19 pandemic. The informal sector widespread in agriculture and fishery sectors in rural areas, as well as in a various economic sector in urban areas which is dominated by those who work in the business of providing food and beverage accommodation; transportation and warehousing; and trade. (Rahman, et al, 2020)

Indonesia is one of the countries with a higher share of informal sector than that of formal sector. As mentioned before that the informal sector plays more higher economic role that that of formal sector in the country. The proportion of the informal workers in urban areas was smaller than those in rural areas. But, regarding the impact of the social restriction policies, the urban informal sector workers in urban areas had a tremendous impact. This simply because most of the urban informal sector workers engage in street vending, home-based work, waste picking, domestic jobs, and other short-term contracts who is highly dependent on daily income that barely allows them to survive and cover their daily necessities. Therefore, their livelihoods destroyed due to the lockdowns and related shelter-at-home restrictions in response to COVID-19. (ILO, 2020b)

The restrictions during the PSBB implementation consist of restrictions on activities in public places or facilities; holidays for school children and workplaces, restrictions on religious activities, restrictions on

socio-cultural activities, restrictions on public transportation, restrictions on other activities. The various restrictions on activities which affects the strict restrictions on population movement sharply reduce economic opportunities for urban informal sector workers who mostly depend on personal contact with customers. Therefore, the majority of urban informal sector workers unable to work or they have to reduce most of their working time. This simply because the majority of informal sector workers are employed in contact-intensive sectors, such as domestic workers, market vendors, and taxi drivers. Their livelihoods and subsistence depend on the day-to-day struggle. They also do not have the ability to work from home (WFH), and staying home may mean they are not able to support their families with basic needs. In addition, the activities of urban informal sector workers are closely related to them who work in the formal sector, where their presence always takes advantage of the formal sector, for example in the provision of food and services. Therefore, the implementation of the WFH and the reduction of working hours in the formal sector leads to a decrease in sales levels and even the loss of customers of the informal sector workers. (Sulistiani, 2021)

In the new normal period there is relaxation of social restrictions. The enactment of the new normal period is one of the government's efforts to

stimulate the community's economic activity to remain productive and avoid the spread of Covid-19 by using a strict health protocol. However, due to the increasing trend of Covid 19 cases, the government issued a policy to re-tighten community activities through the PPKM policy, starting with PPKM-JAWA-Bali, Micro PPKM and Emergency PPKM, which then returned to Micro PPKM after the second wave occurred. The PPKM regulates community activities by referring to several criteria related to pandemic conditions. Regency/ city with severe pandemic conditions, the restrictions on activities are much more tighter, and vice versa. During the PPKM period, the informal sector workers are able to carry out their economic activities with the certain controls which also affect a reduction in customers' number. The informal sector workers who are still doing business during the PPKM period are those who can survive after passing the PSBB implementation period. In other words, the impact of the PSBB policy tends to be more severe than the PPKM policy. The case study carried out in Bekasi, West Java Province, illustrates the impact of Covid-19 pandemic with the social restriction policy on the urban informal sector workers. The impact as also experience by Pak Atim a father of 4 children and Pak Dt who work in motor bike services.

.... life is difficult during this pandemic. In order to meet the needs of his family. Pak Atim do any work

including being a bricklayer. Even though he worked so hard, he said that it is still not enough to meet his family's needs. That's why bp. Atim sometimes borrows money from neighbours.

Dt a 40 years old man who works as motorbike service/workshop:

“..the Covid-19 pandemic greatly affected the performance of my workshop. It automatically having an impact on my family's economic condition, because the workshop was the only business I have. During normal conditions, every day there are no less than ten consumers who need the services of my workshop. But now, with this covid-19 outbreak, only 2-5 clients come, sometimes even all day just sleeping because no client comes.

Similar situation experience by M, a male fried chicken seller

Even though there is a PSBB my business on Fried Chicken is still running. During the Covid-19 pandemic, at first it was felt, there was a decline in sales. According to a rough calculation, the impact of COVID-19 has reduced turnover to only 50% of normal days. Even so, I still can sell my fried chickens even though it hasn't returned to the way it was before the Pandemic.

### **Strategi to overcome the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the business sustainability of informal sector workers**

Indonesia is noted as the country that has share more informal than formal employment. It is support with the national data which shows that in Indonesia there are more workers in the informal sector than in the formal sector as the proportion of the informal

workers in 2019 is 57.3% (Pitoyo, Aditya & Amri, 2020). Many studies have also conducted to study the impact of pandemic Covid-19 towards informal worker (Santoso, Purwaningsih, Widyawati & Latifa, 2021; Hidayati, 2020; Cahyadi, Hidayati & Yogaswara (editor), 2020). Most worker in the informal sector which are affected by the covid-19 pandemic, came from the low income group. The majority of them also have limited saving, so when they face shock due to pandemic covid-19, some of them have economic problem. As the economic country slow down due to the spread of pandemic, many informal workers have also lost their job. While some of the worker still have to support the basic need of their family members such as child education expenses, payment of health fees. Therefore, due to the prolonged crisis, cause severe impact for the informal sector family. Being supported with limited capacity, lead the family to the vulnerable situation. The informants of this research mentioned to cover the family needs, they have to struggle hard to survive.

If informal workers stay at home, the basic living needs of the family will be disrupted or even unfulfilled, while working outside the home faces the risk of contracting COVID-19. The choice between starvation due to disrupted livelihoods and the risk of contracting the virus is a real dilemma faced by informal workers

(ILO, 2020b). The work from home (WFH) policy in the formal sector and restrictions on activities involving large crowds, to large-scale social restriction policies (called PSSB), have resulted in a decrease in the income of informal sector workers. This condition is very difficult for the informal sectors workers as their lives depend on daily income, small-scale, low-income, and not covered by employment and social protection. To maintain the sustainability of their work. The informal sector workers have taken strategies to overcome the impact of policy related to Covid-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has also given rise to various strategies to survive and maintain livelihoods, various strategies carried out by informal workers.

According to Pitoyo, Aditya & Amri (2020) during a crisis, informal sector become an alternative sector that offers business flexibility. When the informal workers lost their jobs, they can easily switch to another job. However, characteristics of the workers also affect job acquisition. The low educational or skill background of the worker, the more they have to rely on the low skilled job. This type of work usually does not have a social security program or benefits. This increased the level of vulnerability of the informal worker. Beside, as mentioning in Smeru Issue Brief (2020), worker with low level of educational face higher risk

of losing their income as well as job than the worker who have high level of educational background. As told by our informant, female informal worker (40 years old), when the activities restriction policy is implemented, her income is reduced by 90 percent. Her husband who work as Gojek driver, has to stay at home for several months due to the activities restriction policy. This situation resulted in families having to tighten spending, prioritizing basic needs. She and her husband, decided to finance for the household needs that were considered the main priority, such as pay rent, food, and daily necessities. Paying rent for a house is considered the main thing because it is an obligation. For food and daily needs, made as economical as possible. For instance, for food expenses which was originally 50 thousand Rupiah a day, to 50 thousand Rupiah for three days. To fulfil the household shortage, the informant and husband argued that they should look for other sources of income. Based on their friends experiences who are trying to sell online, they also being motivated to use online platform for trading. The various goods that are offering through online system are their friends commodities, starting from food, clothing to house goods. Through her social networking, the informant can easily get support from her friends. As mentioned by the informant, they received many assistance from their friends during pandemic Covid-19

(“.....Alhamdulillah mam, God brings a lot of support from others that we didn't expect...”).

The assistance they received was not only from individuals but also from group of society.

Beside social networking approach, other strategies that often undertaken by the informal sector workers facing the economic stressor, is as follows: borrowing money from neighbours or relatives, returning to the village of origin and extending the business' form. Many informal workers are temporary or non-permanent migrant. They migrate to the urban area mostly for the economic reason. Some of the informant said that they eventually decided to return to the village when they face economic disruption during pandemic. In their origin village, at least they don't bother with the house or room rent. Expenditure on food also manageable because the food price is relatively cheap in the village. Usually, the family members who return back to the village are the wife and the children. While the husband, choose to stay in the city and try to get income. To get a clearer picture, you can read the excerpt from the interview with Mr. M (a 41 years old man who work as second-hand things) below:

“ ... Life is not easy nowadays. I have to work hard search for money for my familv (a wife and two daughters who are in the elementary school). I also have to pay my rented room with a monthly fee of Rp. 800,000. I have asked my wife and daughters to go back to our

village in Sukatani.....”

Some of the informants are also trying to add the items being sold, as a case of Ibu S (a 50 years old women, a trader of *nasi uduk*). Ibu S told that during the pandemic Covid-19, her income reduced dramatically. Before the pandemic, she was be able to sell about 60 packages of nasi uduk when this elementary school opens. But now, she found very difficult to earn more money. Every day she can only sell about 20 packages of nasi uduk. With a decreased income, Ibu S feels hard to finance her live properly with her two children and her sick sister. Eventually, her sister returned back to Purworejo because Ibu S could not maintain her medicine anymore. Even though Ibu S has tried to increase her sell items, she still cannot significantly increase her income as before the covid-19 pandemic attack. After selling *nasi uduk*, Ibu S sell *bumbu dapur* in front of her rented house.

Pitoyo, Aditya & Amri (2020) mention in their article that there are pro and contra views about the resilience of the informal sector. One side is optimistic view that the informal sector can survive during a crisis, while others feel pessimist that the informal sector is unable to survive. The pessimist consider that the informal sector will be adversely affected by the economic crisis triggered by the pandemic Covid-19. The informal worker also do not have stable income, so it lead them

in the more vulnerable situation. The informal market is also considered more unpredictable compare to formal sector. Therefore, the informal worker is assumed provide no financial guarantee in the event of lost during the crisis. Some academics also have the notion that informal employment more vulnerable than formal employment (Jaskova & Hum, 2017)

When referring to the informants’ cases, it seems that the informal workers are easily change their type of business when facing a shock. Unlike the formal sector, there are no certain requirements that must be fulfilled by the informal workers to obtain a job in that sector. Based on the experience of the informant, it is relatively easier for them to switch or change the activities or add new job to increase income, which it may not possible for the formal worker. However, informal sector is a kind of activity that do not under government observation, and its owned by individuals or household. So, the worker must have to secure their income/business by themselves. Informal worker is also not protected by legal, social, health protection. Based on other cases, the informal sector is argued cannot be a safety net for those who lost their formal job during the crisis (Pitoyo, Aditya & Amri, 2020). However, this study reveals that by utilising social networking, the informal workers are able to survive during the outbreak. When the market system and

supply chain were disrupted, the social networking are able to support the informal worker by sharing feeling of empathy, providing aid and cooperative actions. Those interactional dimensions (mutual aid, cooperation), are able to enhance the informal worker resilience facing the adversity. As Imperiale and Vanclay mention in their paper (2021), the social interaction among social actors, when a crisis or disaster occurs, will be toward reducing local vulnerabilities, risks and impacts of crisis or disaster; enhancing community wellbeing and the local capacities to reduce risk and build resilience.

The impact of Covid-19 pandemics brings a dilemma situation for the informal sector worker in the urban areas. If informal workers stay at home, the basic living needs of the family will be disrupted or even unfulfilled, while working outside the home faces the risk of contracting COVID-19. The choice between starvation due to disrupted livelihoods and the risk of contracting the virus is a real dilemma faced by informal workers (ILO, 2020b). The work from home (WFH) policy in the formal sector and reduced mobility of people, for example, have resulted in a decrease in the income of informal sector workers. This condition is very difficult for the informal sectors workers as their lives depend on daily income, small-scale, low-income, and not covered by employment and social protection.

To maintain the sustainability of their work. The informal sector workers have taken strategies to overcome the impact of policy related to Covid-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has also given rise to various strategies to survive and maintain livelihoods, various strategies carried out by informal workers. Using social networks, agents and collective organizing to sustain livelihoods is a strategy used by most of the urban informal sector workers (Bhan et al., 2020). Strategies undertaken by the informal sector workers: Borrowing money from neighbours or relatives, returning to the village of origin, Extending the business' form, and Asking help the of social networks.

Bu War, a mother of two teenage children, experience economic hardship during the pandemic. To support her trading business, this family uses a ball pick-up technique, meaning that the purchased goods can be ordered and delivered directly to the consumer's house. For example, buying a gallon of water, the customer just calling for order, then it will be delivered by bu War's husband to the address without any additional costs.

"I can't sell my merchandise ... banana crackers that my family and I made .. I have a mounting debt... that I can't repay... this Covid-19 threatening my family life- for poor informal sector workers like me" ... says Mrn, a small trader from East Bekasi sub-district of Bekasi City.

Informal sector workers tend to

easily change their type of business when facing a shock. As a case of Ibu Sum (a 50 years old women, a trader of nasi uduk) :

“ ...My income reduced dramatically. I was be able to sell about 60 packages of nasi uduk before when this elementary school opens. Now, it is very difficult for me, every day I can only sell about 20 packages. It's really not enough to live with my two children and my sick sister. My sister now has gone back to Purworejo as I could not help her to buy medicine. After selling nasi uduk, I sell bumbu dapur in front of my rented house.

A similar case said by Pak M (a 41 years old man who work as second-hand things

“ ... Life is not easy nowadays. I have to work hard search for money for my familv (a wife and two daughters who are in the elementary school). I also have to pay my rented room with a monthly fee of Rp. 800,000. I have asked my wife and daughters to go back to our village in Sukatani.

### **Social networking as strategy to continue their business -small traders, services**

According to Mitchell (1969 cited in Haryono, 2020), a social network is a set of special or specific relationships formed among a group of people, where the characteristics of these relationships can be used to interpret the social behavior motives of those who involved in it. In reality, these social networks are so complex that they overlap or intersect with each other. The structure formed by these emotional

relationships tends to be steady and permanent. Social relationships that are realized usually tend to be close and continuous relationships. Among the actors tend to like or dislike other actors in the social network. Therefore, there appears to be a relatively strong mutual control between actors (Agusyanto, 1996:19 -19). The existence of social networks due to the interaction between individuals which are directly or indirectly based on a common thread of interest Bandgar (2014). Social networks become part of connectivity in a special way, where there are ties that link each other in social relations. The social network itself serves to perpetuate something that happens in society. Social network is a pattern in the sense of social relationships that are owned by individuals and groups where the pattern of these relationships has a social order for how they behave in the community in accordance with existing norms and values. (<https://dosensosiologi.com/jaringan-sosial/>).

The social networks emerge during the Covid-19 pandemic was mainly related to help from friends who work in similar business to provide information regarding the availability of funding resources that can help them in overcoming the stagnancy of economic activity resulted from the social restriction in relation to Covid-19 pandemic. The networks are formed on the basis of sentimental social relationships such as kinship,

friendship, religious activities, business activity. As Haryono (2014) noted that social networks also emerged especially among urban circular migrants. The migrants maintain their life in the city and achieve success in their economic activities. One of the strategies undertaken by migrants is to develop and maintain social networks among migrants in the village of origin. Using social networks, agents and collective organizing to sustain livelihoods is a strategy used by most of the urban informal sector workers (Bhan et al., 2020). This is the case of the informants we interviewed that they remain keeping in touch with the people from their kampong especially during to pandemic to ask help in running their economic activities.

The type of help asks or receive from the social network were varies, ranging from getting financial support to continue the business that enable the member of the network to survive. In other cases, assistance receive from the other member of social networks were in the form equipment to facilitate the economic activities, place for trading, as well as goods to be sold. Or, in some cases an informal sector worker who are affected by the pandemic got a support from the network in the form of linkage to a digital platform to enable them to sell their product or services. However, this is very limited as it need a skill and infrastructure such as internet connection. One of our informants said

that he asked for a friend to come to him if in any case there is a problem on a motorbike. He depends on the existing customer to promote his skill in motor bike service.

The social networks were formed through kinship, religious group/taklim assembly, friendship, regional ties, etc. According to our informants, there were some social networks that emerged such associations on a regional basis, meaning that they have an organization or association based on their village origin. Social networks are not only based on kinship, ethnic relations and friendship relations that have been widely known, but also social networks among informal sector workers in the form of organization.

Process in which the social networks work to help its member who were affected by the social restriction policy in relation to Covid-19 was through individuals involved. Our informants in Bekasi said that they contact their network since they did not have any access to ask help from their neighbours. Some of them said that their neighbours also experience similar economic problems caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, they prefer to contact other people in their social networks.

Social networks apparently play an important role in assisting the informal sector workers. The network seems to help affected worker in maintaining their business sustainability. Cases

below indicate that the existence of social networks can assist the urban informal workers to survive from the impact of social restriction policy in relation to Covid-19 pandemic.

Even though there was a restriction of people mobility, some informal sector workers were able to work as usual, as it was said by Smj

This Covid-19 really affected me, I almost give up as there was significant decrease of my household income. Fortunately, I have other people to whom I can share my problems, especially during the pandemic like this time. I got help from my network back home in the form of getting goods sent from my village of origin. Beside selling onions and chicken eggs, I also sell rice crackers made by my relative...

The development of social networks varied depending upon the role and function. It is generally noticed that a social network is a social structure formed from nodes (which are generally individuals or organizations) tied together by one or more specific types of relationships such as values, visions, ideas, friends, descendants, etc. (RA Prizeyanto, 2015). However, social networks were also formed on the basis of individuals' interest. For example, our informants explained that social networks that they have was facilitated by the neighborhood leader. In this case, the networks were facilitated through WhattApp's group. Through the group the can express their ideas as well as problem they have. During the pandemic. The group we occupied by

the chatting of Covid-19 information including the offer of possibilities of running business. There were two active members who often share how to make additional income during the pandemic through cooking food for people who were on independent isolation, or selling package household need such as cooking oils, frozen foods, etc. This activity show that networks has played an important role in determining how solve the problem faced by members of the networks.

Social networks apparently have facilitated members to find out a way of finding alternative income generation especially those who are affected during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Another form of social networks was mentioned by our informant such as the Lamongan Fried Duck and Chicken Traders Association. The association has several activities, such as social gathering activities once a month, in these activities there are also levies or fees for the organization. The existence of the network clearly play an important role in assisting financial to the members who were having difficulty in running their business.

## **Conclusion**

The covid-19 pandemic hit severely the informal sector workers. The impact not only on health but also in economic aspect (source of income). Due to loss of income, livelihood and unavailability of cash, many poor families have been

forced to cut-down on their regular spending.

Among others, the strategies taken by the informal sector mainly borrow money without collateral from neighbours or friends. Getting the raw material without paying in advance is also one strategy mentioned by the informant. Those who survive to continue their work activities, especially who have social networks. From the network, members can ask help in the time of economic harsh that enable them to continue running their business. Moreover, the existence of champion in the network was also important as she/he could offer facilitation to the member not only providing access for borrowing capital but also in linking to other sources to make the business remain running well.

The informal sector worker strengthened and widened social networking in order to increase the quantity of production, borrowing money as well as help to seek government assistance to help alleviating their problem of capital or cash to meet t daily basic needs of their family. Strong social network will help many informal workers in coping with difficult situation. Since the social networks has important role for urban informal sector workers especially during the harsh time, it is therefore important to strengthen it. The role is not only merely for economic purposes but also in social aspect. Program either from government or non- government should also put them as their target beneficiaries.[]

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