

Beyond Individual Resilience: Communal Ecology, Social Capital, and Systemic Barriers among Yogyakarta Tour Guides

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This study reconceptualizes resilience from an individual-focused concept to a collective framework called “communal ecology,” in order to better understand how tour guides in the tourism industry cope with systemic barriers and uncertainty. Using a qualitative approach, the study conducted in-depth interviews with 10 professional tour guides in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and analyzed the data thematically. The findings show that communal resilience is shaped by three key pillars: social capital (bonding and bridging) reflected in peer support and faith-based coping strategies, adaptive learning systems through professional associations that enhance knowledge sharing and collective self-efficacy, and the collective negotiation of systemic constraints such as regulatory pressures and market instability. These results extend the Transactional Stress Model by identifying communal social capital as a key resource and enrich the Challenge Metamorphosis Model by introducing the concept of communal ecology. Overall, the study concludes that resilience among tour guides is not merely an individual trait but a socially embedded and collective process driven by communal networks and adaptive collaboration, although its findings are limited by a small sample size and a single geographic context.

Keywords: Adaptive learning system; Communal ecology; Resilience; Social capital; Systemic barriers

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1. Introduction

The tourism industry represents a significant pillar of the global economy, contributing substantially to employment, regional development, and cultural exchange. However, it is also inherently vulnerable to external shocks, including market volatility, regulatory shifts, and global crises such as pandemics and environmental disruptions. Recent studies emphasize that increasing uncertainty, compounded by climate risks and socio-economic instability, has intensified the need for resilience across tourism systems. In this context, resilience is no longer viewed as a static capability but as a dynamic process embedded within broader socio-economic and institutional environments (Berkes and Ross, 2013).

In the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia one of the country's primary cultural tourism destinations tour guides play a pivotal role as frontline actors who directly shape tourist experiences. Their role requires continuous interaction with diverse visitors, demanding high levels of emotional regulation and service performance. Consequently, tour guides are exposed to sustained emotional labor and precarious working conditions, situating them at the intersection of individual psychological strain and systemic vulnerability. These pressures are further intensified by unstable income structures, regulatory ambiguity, and fluctuating tourism demand, which collectively heighten stress and uncertainty (Sinaga, 2024).

Traditionally, resilience has been conceptualized as an individual-level psychological capacity defined as the ability to adapt positively and recover from adversity. At this level, resilience is essential for coping with work-related stressors such as job insecurity, role conflict, and dual role stress. However, emerging scholarship argues that this individual-centric perspective is insufficient in contexts where stressors are

systemic, persistent, and structurally embedded. For instance, continuous emotional labor demands cannot be effectively mitigated solely through individual coping strategies. Instead, resilience must be understood as a collective and relational phenomenon supported by social, institutional, and cultural resources (Ochieng, Bitok and Muthengi, 2025).

Recent high-impact studies have increasingly highlighted the importance of community-level resilience in tourism. For example, research in the *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management* demonstrates that community resilience plays a mediating role in linking tourism activities to quality-of-life outcomes, emphasizing the importance of collective adaptive capacity. Similarly, studies published in *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* show that relational and social capital significantly enhance resilience in tourism-based enterprises by enabling resource sharing, innovation, and adaptive strategies. Furthermore, a systematic review in *Frontiers in Environmental Science* confirms that social capital is a critical determinant of community resilience, facilitating coordination, trust-building, and collective action in the face of uncertainty. These findings collectively suggest that resilience in tourism is deeply embedded in social systems rather than solely within individuals (Wakil, Sun and Chan, 2021).

To address these theoretical limitations, this study introduces the concept of communal ecology, reframing resilience as a socially embedded, collectively sustained process. This perspective aligns with macro-level psychological approaches that emphasize the role of social structures, networks, and shared resources in shaping adaptive capacity. Within this framework, social capital defined as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit serves as a foundational mechanism (Masrun *et al.*, 2026).

Social capital operates through two primary dimensions: bonding and bridging. Bonding social capital strengthens internal cohesion, solidarity, and emotional support among group members, enabling individuals to cope with stress through shared understanding and mutual assistance. In contrast, bridging social capital connects individuals and groups to external resources, including institutional actors, market opportunities, and regulatory systems. In tourism contexts, bridging social capital is particularly critical for navigating systemic barriers, such as limited access to healthcare, weak labor protections, and policy uncertainty. Prior research highlights that these structural constraints significantly shape the vulnerability and adaptive capacity of tourism workers (McKercher and Darcy, 2018).

For tour guides in Yogyakarta, resilience is further shaped by the interaction between emotional labor and dual-role stress, which amplifies psychological strain. Within this environment, professional associations and informal networks function as adaptive learning systems, providing platforms for knowledge sharing, skill development, and collective problem-solving. These systems enhance collective self-efficacy, enabling tour guides to respond more effectively to uncertainty and change. Moreover, cultural and spiritual dimensions such as faith-based coping play a significant role in reinforcing resilience within Indonesia's collectivist society. These cultural resources are closely intertwined with social capital, further strengthening communal adaptive capacity.

Despite growing scholarly attention to resilience and social capital in tourism the literature remains predominantly focused on individual-level outcomes and organizational responses. A recent systematic review of social capital in tourism highlights the lack of an in-depth understanding of how social networks function in practice to support adaptation and mobility, particularly in post-crisis contexts. Moreover, there is limited qualitative research examining how tourism workers in Southeast Asia characterized by strong collectivist values and spiritual orientations leverage social capital to navigate systemic barriers and psychological stress.

More importantly, the role of bridging social capital as a strategic mechanism for overcoming systemic barriers remains underexplored. While existing studies acknowledge the importance of networks and relationships, they often fail to capture how these networks operate as structural bridges that connect individuals to external resources and institutional support systems. This gap is particularly relevant in the Indonesian tourism context, where informal networks and community-based organizations play a central role in shaping work experiences and coping strategies.

Accordingly, this study aims to qualitatively explore how professional tour guides in Yogyakarta construct resilience through social capital and utilize it as a collective adaptive mechanism to negotiate systemic barriers. By focusing on communal processes rather than individual traits, this research offers a novel perspective on resilience in tourism. The study specifically examines how bonding and bridging social capital interact within a broader communal ecology, enabling tour guides to cope with emotional labor, mitigate dual role stress, and adapt to regulatory and market uncertainties (Folke, 2006).

2. Methods

Research Design and Approach

This study adopts a qualitative research design using a reflexive thematic analysis approach, as developed by . A qualitative approach is appropriate given the study's aim to explore how resilience is socially constructed and collectively enacted within the context of systemic barriers in the tourism sector. Rather than treating resilience as an individual attribute, this study conceptualizes it as a relational, context-dependent process embedded in a communal ecology. The research is grounded in a social constructivist paradigm, which assumes that meanings and realities are co-constructed through social interaction, shared experiences, and language. This perspective is particularly relevant for examining how tour guides interpret and respond to structural challenges, as well as how collective coping mechanisms emerge through social networks and institutional engagement (Filimonau and De Coteau, 2020).

Reflexive thematic analysis was selected for its flexibility and capacity to capture both explicit (semantic) and underlying (latent) meanings within participants' narratives. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the interconnections between social capital, adaptive systems, and systemic barriers, as identified in the analytical framework. The study followed an iterative, interpretive process, in which themes were actively developed by the researcher rather than passively discovered.

To ensure rigor and trustworthiness, several strategies were employed. Credibility was enhanced through member checking, whereby participants were invited to review and validate the interpretations of their responses. Additionally, thematic saturation was used as a guiding principle to ensure sufficient depth and richness of data . Reflexivity was also maintained throughout the research process, with the researcher critically reflecting on their role in data interpretation.

Participants

The study involved ten professional tour guides (N = 10) based in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure they had relevant experience and insight into the collective and structural dynamics under investigation. This sample size is consistent with qualitative research standards and was deemed sufficient to achieve thematic saturation, particularly for in-depth thematic analysis .

To ensure the relevance and richness of the data, the study applied the following inclusion criteria:

1. A minimum of five years of professional experience in the tourism industry in Yogyakarta.
2. Active membership in a professional tour guide association (e.g., Himpunan Pramuwisata Indone-

sia/HPI), ensuring familiarity with collective networks and social capital structures.

3. Direct involvement in collective adaptation efforts, such as participation in organizational initiatives or engagement with regulatory processes addressing systemic barriers.

These criteria ensured that participants had both experiential and contextual knowledge of the phenomena under study, particularly regarding communal resilience and structural challenges.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted between January and March 2025. This method was chosen to allow participants to share detailed narratives of their experiences while maintaining sufficient flexibility to explore emergent themes. An interview guide was developed based on the study's analytical framework, covering key areas such as experiences of crisis, emotional labor, the role of professional associations, collective coping strategies, and interactions with systemic barriers. Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes and was conducted in a setting convenient for the participant (Hair *et al.*, 2019). All interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized to ensure confidentiality. Ethical considerations, including voluntary participation and data protection, were strictly upheld throughout the research process.

Data analysis followed the six-phase reflexive thematic analysis procedure outlined by

1. Data familiarization: Repeated reading of transcripts to gain an in-depth understanding of the data.
2. Initial coding: Systematic identification of meaningful data segments relevant to the research objectives.
3. Searching for themes: Grouping codes into broader patterns representing potential themes.
4. Reviewing themes: Refining themes to ensure internal coherence and clear distinctions between themes.
5. Defining and naming themes: Articulating the essence of each theme and its contribution to the overall narrative.
6. Producing the report: Integrating themes into a coherent analytical narrative linked to the research questions and theoretical framework.

The analysis was guided by the study's three core dimensions: (1) social capital (bonding and bridging), (2) adaptive systems (collective learning and coordination), and (3) systemic barriers (regulatory and structural constraints). This ensured strong alignment among the literature review, data collection, and findings, thereby enhancing the study's analytical rigor.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings from in-depth interviews with ten professional tour guides in Yogyakarta and integrates them with theoretical interpretation (Norris *et al.*, 2008). Using reflexive thematic analysis, three overarching themes were identified, representing the core dimensions of communal ecology: (1) social capital, (2) adaptive systems, and (3) systemic barriers. Rather than presenting findings descriptively, this section analytically demonstrates how communal resilience is constructed through the interaction of these dimensions.

Participant Profile

The study involved ten professional tour guides (N = 10) with 5–20 years of experience, all actively engaged in professional associations. Participants were selected for their direct involvement in collective practices, including regulatory negotiation, adaptive training, and peer support systems. This ensured that

the data captured not only individual experiences but also communal and structural dynamics relevant to resilience construction.

Table of Participant Demographics and Professional Profiles

Participant ID	Gender	Work (Years)	Experience	Association Membership	Mem-	Additional information
Subj. 1	Man	15		Active (HPI)		Regulatory Negotiation Experience
Subj. 2	Woman	7		Active (Local Association)		Engage in an Adaptive Training Program
Subj. 3	Man	20		Active (HPI)		Association Management
Subj. 4	Man	12		Active (HPI)		Experiencing the Pandemic Crisis Firsthand
Subj. 5	Woman	8		Active (Local Association)		Sharing <i>Coping Tips</i> for SPGs
Subj. 6	Woman	10		Active (HPI)		Focus on <i>Gender Barriers</i>
Subj. 7	Man	14		Active (HPI)		Sharing Faith-Based Coping Practices
Subj. 8	Man	9		Active (Local Association)		Engage Access Resources
Subj. 9	Woman	11		Active (HPI)		Focus on Emotional Labor and SPG
Subj. 10	Man	5		Active (HPI)		Experiencing <i>Mastery</i> Through <i>Peer Learning</i>

Theme 1: Social Capital as the Foundation of Communal Resilience

This theme demonstrates that resilience is fundamentally rooted in social capital, which operates through the complementary functions of bonding and bridging. These two forms are not separate but mutually reinforcing in shaping both emotional and structural coping.

Bridging Social Capital: Associations as Structural Enablers

Findings indicate that professional associations function as key institutional intermediaries, enabling access to external resources, regulatory information, and collective representation. Participants emphasized that during crises, associations not formal institutions often become the primary source of support.

“During the pandemic, the first to help us was not the government, but the association... We know we are not alone.” (Subj. 4)

This finding extends prior research on social capital by demonstrating that bridging ties are not merely supportive but structurally transformative, enabling what can be termed collective negotiation capacity. In line with the literature, bridging social capital facilitates access to macro-level resources, but this study further shows its role in converting vulnerability into collective agency.

Bonding Social Capital: Faith-Based Coping and Emotional Cohesion

At the intra-community level, bonding social capital emerges through strong emotional and spiritual ties. Faith-based coping is consistently identified as a shared mechanism that provides meaning, emotional stability, and collective reassurance.

“We remind each other... this is a trial. Faith relieves stress.” (Subj. 7)

This finding highlights an important cultural extension to resilience theory. While Western models emphasize cognitive coping, this study demonstrates that spiritual meaning-making functions as a collective emotional regulator, reinforcing resilience in collectivist contexts. Thus, bonding social capital operates not only as emotional support but also as a culturally embedded coping infrastructure.

Theme 2: Adaptive Systems and Collective Self-Efficacy

The second theme illustrates how social capital is operationalized into adaptive systems that enhance collective competence. Resilience is not static but continuously constructed through shared learning and interaction.

Collective Learning and Mastery Development

Participants described how peer networks function as informal learning platforms where practical challenges are collectively addressed. Experience-sharing transforms individual difficulties into shared knowledge, gradually building confidence and competence.

*"Now, I ask my friends... we share methods. I've become convinced every problem has a solution."
(Subj. 2)*

This finding supports and extends existing theories of self-efficacy by demonstrating that efficacy is not purely individual but collectively constructed through interaction. The association acts as an adaptive learning system, reinforcing the idea that resilience emerges from continuous communal engagement rather than isolated effort.

Collective Emotion Regulation

Participants also highlighted the importance of peer support in managing emotional labor and work–family conflict. Sharing experiences within trusted networks allows individuals to reframe stress and reduce emotional dissonance.

"They understand... hearing that helped me reframe." (Subj. 9)

This finding advances the concept of emotion regulation by introducing a collective dimension in which emotional processing is distributed across social networks. This mechanism is particularly critical for mitigating dual-role stress, demonstrating that communal coping can reduce reliance on individual surface-acting strategies.

Theme 3: Negotiating Systemic Barriers through Collective Action

The third theme shifts the focus from internal coping to external adaptation, emphasizing resilience as an active and strategic response to structural constraints.

Regulatory Barriers and Collective Advocacy

Participants consistently identified regulatory uncertainty and limited access to resources as major stressors. Individual efforts were perceived as ineffective, whereas collective action through associations enabled negotiation and advocacy.

"If we are alone, we will not be heard... our resilience depends on how strong our network is." (Subj. 1)

This finding reframes resilience from "bouncing back" to "negotiating forward", where communities actively engage with institutional systems. Bridging social capital thus functions as a mechanism of structural adaptation, not merely support.

Gendered Dimensions of Resilience

Female participants reported additional challenges related to dual roles and gender expectations. Informal support networks among women provided critical spaces for sharing coping strategies.

“Female guides have to fight twice... support from other women helps a lot.” (Subj. 6)

This highlights that resilience is not uniform but shaped by social position. Bonding social capital plays a gender-sensitive role, offering targeted support where formal systems are insufficient. This finding adds nuance to resilience theory by incorporating intersectional dimensions.

Discussion

Resilience as Communal Ecology

This study reconceptualizes resilience as a communal ecology that integrates social, cultural, and structural dimensions. Unlike prior studies that focus on individual or organizational resilience, the findings demonstrate that resilience emerges from the interaction between bonding social capital, bridging networks, and adaptive systems. This perspective aligns with community psychology by positioning resilience as an ecological phenomenon embedded in social relationships and institutional contexts. The study, therefore, fills a critical gap by introducing a meso-level (communal) analysis that bridges micro-psychological processes and macro-structural conditions (Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker, 2000).

Theoretical Extension: Reformulating the Transactional Model

The findings challenge the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Aldrich and Meyer, 2015) by demonstrating that coping resources are not solely individual but pre-structured through social capital. In this study, communal networks function as antecedent resources that shape how stress is experienced and managed. Additionally, the identification of collective emotion regulation expands coping theory by introducing a shared, socially distributed mechanism of stress management (Nzomo, Bitok and Muthengi, 2025).

From Passive Resilience to Agility Resilience

A major contribution of this study is the shift from passive resilience (bouncing back) to agility resilience, defined as the ability to adapt, respond, and transform in the face of systemic barriers. This is particularly evident in the role of associations as agents of collective advocacy. This extends the Challenge–Metamorphosis Model by demonstrating that transformation is grounded in prior communal capacity.

4. Conclusion

This study reconceptualizes psychological resilience among professional tour guides in Yogyakarta as a “Communal Ecology” phenomenon, shifting the focus from individual coping mechanisms to collectively embedded and institutionally mediated resilience processes. The findings show that resilience emerges through the interaction of social capital, collective self-efficacy, and association-based governance, particularly in managing dual-role stress and systemic constraints within the tourism sector. Bonding and bridging social capital operate as an integrated resilience infrastructure, where professional associations serve both as sources of emotional support and as intermediaries for collective advocacy. The study extends the Transactional Model of Stress by positioning social capital as a key antecedent resource in collective coping, and introduces Communal Ecology as a meso-level framework for understanding resilience and adaptation in tourism. It also conceptualizes resilience agility as an outcome of collective negotiation processes that transform individual distress into coordinated policy advocacy, highlighting the need to shift resilience discourse toward systemic governance supported by associations and bridging networks.

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However, the study has several limitations, including a small sample of 10 tour guides, a focus on a single geographic context (Yogyakarta, Indonesia), and the inherently non-generalizable nature of its qualitative design. These constraints suggest that the findings should be interpreted as context-specific insights rather than broad generalizations.

Future research is encouraged to expand the sample size and geographic scope by including diverse tourism destinations and occupational groups. Comparative and cross-cultural studies could further illuminate how institutional, cultural, and policy environments shape communal resilience. Additionally, mixed-method and longitudinal approaches may help examine the evolution of communal resilience over time, particularly during crises and recovery phases. Further exploration of digital communities, government roles, and cross-sector collaboration is also needed to better understand and strengthen resilience governance in the tourism workforce.

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