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Social Capital and Collective Action in Rural Tourism: Lessons from Award-Winning Village Tourism in West Java

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ABSTRACT

Background/Context: Community-based tourism (CBT) has become a central strategy in Indonesian rural development policy, yet despite substantial government investment, the overwhelming majority of registered tourism villages fail to achieve sustained competitiveness. Understanding what enables some villages to perform exceptionally remains a challenge for both scholars and practitioners. **Research Gap / Problem Statement:** Existing literature has extensively examined supply-side and infrastructural determinants of village tourism success, but has devoted far less attention to the internal social architecture of high-performing communities, specifically how social capital dimensions and collective action mechanisms interact to produce sustained tourism governance capacity in non-Western, rural contexts. **Objective / Purpose:** This study investigates how social capital and collective action mechanisms underpin the exceptional performance of Cisaat Tourism Village in Subang Regency, West Java, a nationally recognised winner of the Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia (ADWI) competition, using Putnam's (2000) tripartite social capital framework and Ostrom's (1990) collective action theory. **Methodology:** An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed. A structured survey was administered to 150 community members and analysed using PLS-SEM. Twelve in-depth interviews with key stakeholders were analysed through reflexive thematic analysis. **Key Findings / Results:** All three dimensions of social capital: bonding, bridging, and linking, all exert significant positive effects on collective action ($p < 0.01$), which in turn strongly predicts tourism village sustainability ($p < 0.001$, $\beta = 0.58$). Bridging social capital emerged as the strongest predictor of collective action ($\beta = 0.43$). Qualitatively, three enabling themes were identified: trust as a foundational resource, external networks as catalysts for collective mobilisation, and shared vision sustained through inclusive leadership. **Conclusion:** Gotong royong, the indigenous Indonesian practice of mutual cooperation, functions as a culturally specific mechanism for bonding social capital that extends Ostrom's collective action framework to non-Western contexts. **Implications / Contribution:** These findings offer a replicable, evidence-based model for village tourism development policy in Indonesia and across the Global South, and provide a validated Social Capital Scale for integration into national tourism village accreditation systems.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's village tourism sector has experienced remarkable policy attention over the past decade. The national programme *Desa Wisata*, institutionalised under Law No. 6 of 2014 on Village Governance, reflects the government's commitment to leveraging rural cultural and natural assets as engines of inclusive economic development. By 2023, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) had registered more than 3,600 active tourism villages across the archipelago, with flagship competitions such as the Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia (ADWI) serving as both quality benchmarks and promotional platforms [1]. However, behind these impressive aggregate figures lies a persistent structural paradox: the overwhelming majority of registered villages fail to sustain meaningful tourism activity beyond an initial period of government-supported enthusiasm. Inadequate community cohesion, fragmented stakeholder collaboration, and weak local governance capacity are frequently cited as causes of this underperformance [2], [3].

Cisaat Village, located in Subang Regency, West Java Province, represents a conspicuous exception to this pattern. Widely documented as a nationally recognised tourism village [4], Cisaat has achieved competitive distinction through a community-driven trajectory rooted in local participation, entrepreneurship, and inter-institutional linkage. This trajectory raises a key question: what configurations of social assets and governance arrangements enable a rural community to sustain competitive tourism performance?

Existing literature has extensively examined the structural determinants of village tourism success from supply-side, infrastructural, and top-down governance perspectives [5], [6]. Far less attention has been devoted to the internal social architecture of high-performing communities, specifically to how trust, reciprocity, networks, and norms cohere into collective capacity for tourism governance. This gap is consequential. If social capital is indeed a generative precondition for effective community-based tourism (CBT), then understanding its dimensions, dynamics, and mechanisms in award-winning cases carries substantial implications for replication policy. While scholars have documented the role of community participation and institutional arrangements in CBT success [5], [6], most studies treat social capital as a background condition rather than a multi-dimensional construct with components of differential predictive power. Rahmawati et al. [13] demonstrated the enabling role of social capital in fostering non-tourism actor involvement, and Nguyen et al. [15] measured the bonding, bridging, and linking dimensions in urban Vietnamese contexts. Nevertheless, neither study quantified the relative influence of each dimension on collective action capacity in a high-performing rural tourism community. The novelty of the present study lies in its integration of Putnam's tripartite social capital framework with Ostrom's collective action theory in a mixed-methods design applied to a nationally award-winning Indonesian village, producing the first quantified path model of social capital → collective action → tourism sustainability in this context, complemented by qualitative identification of the culturally specific mechanism of gotong royong as a non-Western form of bonding social capital.

This study aims to examine the social foundations of award-winning village tourism performance in rural Indonesia by investigating Cisaat Tourism Village through the

theoretical lens of Putnam's (2000) social capital framework and Ostrom's (1990) collective action theory. Three research questions structure the inquiry: (1) What forms and dimensions of social capital characterise the Cisaat community's engagement with village tourism development? (2) How do collective action mechanisms operate among diverse stakeholders within Cisaat Tourism Village? (3) What is the structural relationship between the dimensions of social capital and the sustainability of rural tourism development in the Cisaat context?

The study makes three principal contributions. Theoretically, it extends social capital and collective action frameworks to village tourism governance in an Indonesian context, thereby enriching Global South perspectives in CBT scholarship and advancing a culturally sensitive reading of Ostrom's framework. Methodologically, it offers a validated mixed-methods instrument combining a Social Capital Scale and reflexive thematic analysis applicable in comparable rural tourism settings. Practically, it provides an evidence-based framework for replication and for integrating social capital metrics into national tourism village accreditation systems, with direct relevance for the Kemenparekraf's desa wisata policy agenda.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employs an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design [7], in which a quantitative survey phase is conducted first to map structural relationships among variables, followed by a qualitative phase that elucidates the mechanisms and processes underlying the statistical patterns. This sequencing is appropriate when an established theoretical framework generates testable hypotheses while the community context requires interpretive depth that surveys alone cannot provide.

2.2 Research Site

Cisaat Village (*Desa Cisaat*), Subang Regency, West Java Province, was selected based on theoretical purposiveness: its documented achievement as a nationally competitive tourism village makes it a critical case for testing hypotheses about the enabling conditions of high-performing rural tourism. Located approximately 165 kilometres from Jakarta, Cisaat has developed a diversified tourism portfolio encompassing agro-tourism, cultural performance tourism, and educational eco-tourism. The village's tourism governance is anchored in a formally constituted Tourism Awareness Group (*Kelompok Sadar Wisata, Pokdarwis*) and a Village-Owned Enterprise (*Badan Usaha Milik Desa, BUMDes*), both of which interface with local tour operators, the Subang Regency Tourism Office, and national programme administrators. Data collection was conducted between January and April 2024, encompassing both the quantitative survey and qualitative interview phases.

2.3 Quantitative Phase

A structured questionnaire was administered to 150 community members actively involved in tourism-related activities, selected through purposive sampling. The sample size meets the minimum requirements for PLS-SEM at the specified statistical power level [8].

Social capital dimensions were measured using an adapted version of Onyx and Bullen's (2000) Social Capital Scale [9], with modifications to reflect the Indonesian rural tourism context; the collective action scale drew on Ostrom's (1990) design principles operationalised for community tourism governance [10]; and the sustainability scale incorporated economic, socio-cultural, and governance indicators consistent with ASEAN CBT standards [11].

Data were analysed using SmartPLS 4.0. Measurement model assessment confirmed satisfactory convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted [AVE] > 0.50 for all constructs), discriminant validity (Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio [HTMT] < 0.85), and construct reliability (composite reliability [CR] > 0.70). Structural model assessment reported path coefficients, bootstrapped t-statistics, and effect sizes (f^2) for each hypothesised relationship. The study's independent variables were the three dimensions of social capital: bonding social capital (intra-community trust, reciprocity, and solidarity), bridging social capital (inter-organisational networks connecting diverse groups), and linking social capital (vertical ties between community and government or institutional actors). The dependent variable was tourism sustainability, measured across economic, socio-cultural, and governance sub-dimensions. Collective action served as the mediating variable, operationalised through community participation, rule compliance, and shared governance behaviours. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

2.4 Qualitative Phase

Twelve semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with purposively selected stakeholders: the Village Head (*Kepala Desa*), the Pokdarwis Chair, three active BUMDes members, two local tour operators with established operations in the village, two Subang Regency Tourism Office officials, a representative of a local higher education institution engaged in community service activities in Cisaat, and two regular inbound tourists. Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, audio-recorded with informed consent, and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive thematic analysis, proceeding through six phases: familiarisation, generating initial codes, constructing themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the analytical narrative [12].

2.5 Integration Strategy and Ethical Considerations

Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings followed a joint-display approach [7], in which thematic findings were arrayed alongside structural equation modelling results to assess convergence, complementarity, and the expansion of inference. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained in writing, and all qualitative data were anonymised prior to analysis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents findings from the data analysis, organised according to the sequential mixed-methods design. It covers respondent characteristics, PLS-SEM results for measurement and structural models, qualitative thematic findings, and a mixed-methods synthesis. Together, these address the three research questions stated in the Introduction.

3.1 Respondent Profile and Descriptive Statistics

Of the 150 survey respondents, 58.7% were female and 41.3% male, reflecting the substantial role of women in Cisaat's tourism micro-enterprises, particularly in homestay management, cultural craft production, and culinary tourism. The majority (64.0%) had completed secondary education, and 71.3% reported that tourism-related income constituted at least 30% of household earnings, indicating meaningful economic integration into the tourism sector. Mean scores across social capital dimensions demonstrated that bonding social capital scored highest ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.48$), followed by bridging social capital ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.53$) and linking social capital ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.61$), on a five-point Likert scale. The relatively lower mean for linking capital reflects the documented challenges of community–government interface in Indonesian rural governance contexts [5].

3.2 PLS-SEM Results: Measurement Model

Measurement model assessment confirmed the reliability and validity of all constructs. Composite reliability ranged from 0.81 (Linking SC) to 0.91 (Bonding SC), exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. AVE values ranged from 0.53 (Collective Action) to 0.67 (Tourism Sustainability), satisfying the Fornell-Larcker criterion for convergent validity. HTMT ratios for all construct pairs remained below 0.85, confirming discriminant validity.

Table 1. Measurement Model: Reliability and Validity

Construct	Items	AVE	CR	Cronbach's α
Bonding Social Capital	6	0.65	0.91	0.88
Bridging Social Capital	5	0.61	0.88	0.84
Linking Social Capital	5	0.57	0.81	0.79
Collective Action	7	0.53	0.85	0.81
Tourism Sustainability	6	0.67	0.90	0.87

Note: AVE = Average Variance Extracted; CR = Composite Reliability.

3.3 PLS-SEM Results: Structural Model

The structural model yielded R^2 values of 0.621 for Collective Action and 0.574 for Tourism Sustainability, indicating that the social capital dimensions collectively explain 62.1% of the variance in collective action capacity, while collective action accounts for 57.4% of the variance in tourism sustainability. All four hypothesised paths were statistically significant at $p < 0.01$ or better.

Table 2. *Structural Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results*

Hypothesis / Path	β	SE	t-stat	p-value	f^2	Decision
H1: Bonding SC $\rightarrow$ Collective Action	0.31	0.06	5.21	< .001	0.18	Supported
H2: Bridging SC $\rightarrow$ Collective Action	0.43	0.07	6.17	< .001	0.29	Supported
H3: Linking SC $\rightarrow$ Collective Action	0.26	0.07	3.71	< .001	0.11	Supported
H4: Collective Action $\rightarrow$ Tourism Sustainability	0.58	0.06	9.67	< .001	0.52	Supported

Note: β = standardised path coefficient; SE = standard error; f^2 = effect size.

Notably, bridging social capital ($\beta = 0.43$) exerted the strongest influence on collective action, exceeding both bonding ($\beta = 0.31$) and linking ($\beta = 0.26$) social capital. The effect size for the Collective Action $\rightarrow$ Tourism Sustainability path ($f^2 = 0.52$) indicates a large practical effect, confirming collective action as a potent and substantive predictor of sustainability outcomes in this context.

3.4 Qualitative Findings

3.4.1 Theme 1: Trust as a Foundational Resource

All twelve participants identified interpersonal trust as the foundational precondition for village tourism governance. The Pokdarwis Chair articulated this clearly: the village's capacity to mobilise collective labour, including the construction of tourism infrastructure through gotong royong work parties, was premised not on formal contracts but on trust accumulated over decades of communal life. Several participants distinguished between *kepercayaan antar warga* (inter-resident trust) and *kepercayaan kelembagaan* (institutional trust), noting that the former was historically rooted while the latter required deliberate cultivation through transparent and participatory governance practices.

This finding extends the quantitative finding that bonding social capital, operationalised in part through trust and reciprocity measures, significantly predicts collective action. The qualitative data, however, suggest that trust in Cisaat operates as both an input to collective action and an output of successful collective episodes, a dynamic that cross-sectional survey data cannot fully capture. This recursive relationship between trust and collective action resonates with Ostrom's (1990) observation that enduring common-pool resource institutions typically feature graduated sanctioning systems that simultaneously protect and reproduce community trust.

3.4.2 Theme 2: External Networks as Catalysts for Collective Mobilisation

Eight of twelve participants explicitly identified connections with external actors, particularly local tour operators, a regional university conducting community service programmes, and the Subang Regency Tourism Office, as transformative for the village's development trajectory. The Village Head described a moment of pivotal capacity-building: a series of training workshops co-facilitated by a local private tour operator and university staff that introduced the community to destination marketing, hospitality standards, and tourism product packaging. These workshops catalysed a restructuring of the Pokdarwis, drawing in younger residents and female entrepreneurs who had previously been peripheral to tourism governance.

This finding corroborates the quantitative primacy of bridging social capital and extends Rahmawati et al.'s finding that external network ties are critical for expanding the boundaries of collective governance beyond an initial core group [13]. Importantly, the tour operator's role in Cisaat was not merely commercial: as a practitioner with national industry networks, they served as a crucial connector between the village community and market opportunities, government contacts, and technical knowledge, a 'bridging broker' function that aligns with Woolcock's formulation of linking social capital as institutionally mediated vertical connectivity [14].

3.4.3 Theme 3: Shared Vision and Inclusive Leadership

A third theme, shared vision sustained through inclusive and facilitative leadership, emerged as a necessary condition for translating social capital into sustained collective action. Participants consistently described the Village Head's leadership style as consultative rather than directive, emphasising deliberative processes (*musyawarah*) and consensus-building (*mufakat*) as governance norms that maintained broad community buy-in across the multiple phases of tourism development. This finding resonates with Ostrom's emphasis on collective-choice arrangements as a design principle of enduring governance institutions [10].

Tourism officials from the Subang Regency Tourism Office confirmed that Cisaat's governance model was distinctive in its capacity to sustain community-wide participation beyond initial enthusiasm: the village's consistent representation in regional and national competitions was attributed not to infrastructure quality alone but to the organisational coherence that inclusive leadership had generated.

3.5 Integrated Findings: Mixed-Methods Synthesis

The joint display analysis reveals strong convergence between quantitative and qualitative findings across all four hypotheses. The quantitative primacy of bridging social capital ($\beta = 0.43$) is confirmed and enriched by qualitative evidence of the transformative role of external networks and tour operator brokerage. The quantitative significance of bonding social capital ($\beta = 0.31$) is elaborated through qualitative identification of trust and *gotong royong* as culturally specific mechanisms. The somewhat lower quantitative coefficient for linking capital ($\beta = 0.26$), while statistically robust, is contextualised qualitatively by participants' references to bureaucratic friction and the contingent nature of government support, consistent with Nguyen et al.'s finding that governance quality moderates the utility of linking capital [15].

In summary, the results yield four key findings that collectively address the study's research questions. First, all three dimensions of social capital significantly predict collective action capacity (H1–H3 supported, $p < 0.001$), with bridging social capital as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.43$). Second, collective action is a strong and significant predictor of tourism sustainability (H4 supported, $\beta = 0.58$, $f^2 = 0.52$). Third, *gotong royong* operates as a culturally embedded mechanism for bonding social capital, with enforcement properties distinct from those of its Western analogues. Fourth, external network brokerage, particularly by local tour operators, functions as a catalyst for expanding collective

governance beyond the initial community core. These findings are discussed in depth in the following section.

Discussion

Theoretical Contributions

The finding that bridging social capital is the strongest predictor of collective action in Cisaat's tourism governance challenges a strand of CBT scholarship that has implicitly prioritised bonding capital, particularly community cohesion, internal solidarity and shared identity, as the primary social foundation of sustainable rural tourism [16]. The Cisaat evidence suggests that while bonding capital provides the trust infrastructure for collective action, it is the activation of external networks, that is bridging capital, that transforms latent social resources into dynamic governance capacity. This accords with Putnam's original argument that bridging capital, being outward-looking, generates 'broader identities and reciprocity', and with Wu's post-disaster tourism recovery evidence from China [17].

The study also makes an original theoretical contribution by demonstrating that *gotong royong* functions as a culturally embedded, non-Western instantiation of bonding social capital with distinctive properties. While Western social capital theory conceptualises bonding capital primarily as a product of voluntary association [18], *gotong royong* is simultaneously a cultural obligation, a social norm, and a voluntary practice. This more complex hybrid carries both stronger enforcement mechanisms and stronger community legitimacy. This finding extends Ostrom's framework by acknowledging that the 'norms of appropriate behaviour' underpinning collective institutions may be culturally specific and may carry enforcement properties more potent than Ostrom's original framework anticipated in modern Western contexts. The implication is that, in theory, generative concepts like *gotong royong* deserve more systematic treatment in global CBT scholarship rather than peripheral acknowledgement as a 'local condition'.

Comparative Insights from the ASEAN Context

Comparison with CBT cases in Vietnam [19] and Thailand [20] reveals both shared structural dynamics and contextually specific differences. All three national cases confirm the importance of multi-stakeholder networks (bridging capital) and institutional linkage (linking capital) as prerequisites for scaling village tourism beyond community-level management. The distinctive contribution of the Indonesian case lies in the institutional scaffolding provided by the ADWI competition, which functions as a linking capital accelerator. By positioning Cisaat in national competitive discourse, ADWI attracted government attention, media coverage, university partnerships, and private sector investment that collectively amplified the village's existing social capital base. This suggests that well-designed competitive award programmes can function as exogenous triggers for linking capital formation, a policy insight absent from the existing ASEAN CBT literature.

Practical Implications

For village governance practitioners, the study recommends a sequenced strategy: first consolidating bonding capital through participatory governance reforms and *gotong*

royong revitalisation programmes embedded in BUMDes charters (consistent with Beltran et al. recommendation for institutionalising reciprocity programmes) [21]; second, actively cultivating bridging capital through structured partnerships with local tour operators, universities, and NGOs; and third, strategically leveraging linking capital through participation in competitive programmes like ADWI to attract institutional resources and legitimacy.

For the national tourism policy, the study provides quantitative evidence that social capital metrics, specifically bridging capital as measured by network diversity and density, should be incorporated into desa wisata accreditation criteria alongside existing infrastructure and marketing measures. Prayitno et al. proposed a Community Reciprocity Index as one operationalisation; the present study's Social Capital Scale offers a complementary instrument validated in the West Java context [2].

4. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the social foundations of award-winning village tourism performance in rural Indonesia, focusing on how social capital and collective action enable sustained competitiveness. Using Cisaat Tourism Village in Subang Regency, West Java, selected as a national ADWI award recipient, as a theoretically purposive case, the study applied Putnam's (2000) tripartite social capital framework and Ostrom's (1990) collective action theory through an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design combining PLS-SEM with 150 survey respondents and reflexive thematic analysis of twelve in-depth interviews. The three research questions posed in the Introduction, which concern the forms of social capital in Cisaat, the operation of collective action mechanisms, and the structural relationship between social capital and tourism sustainability, are addressed by four principal findings. First, all three dimensions of social capital: bonding, bridging, and linking, all significantly predict collective action capacity (all $p < 0.001$), with bridging social capital emerging as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.43$). Second, collective action exerts a strong and statistically significant effect on tourism sustainability ($\beta = 0.58$, $f^2 = 0.52$). This confirms collective action as a generative mechanism rather than merely a correlate of performance. Third, *gotong royong* operates as a culturally specific mechanism for bonding social capital, extending Ostrom's collective action framework to non-Western governance contexts, with stronger enforcement properties and greater community legitimacy than Western analogues. Fourth, external network brokerage. In particular, local tour operators acting as bridging intermediaries serve as catalysts for expanding collective governance beyond initial community boundaries.

Theoretically, this study makes three contributions to CBT scholarship. It produces the first quantified path model of social capital $\rightarrow$ collective action $\rightarrow$ tourism sustainability in an award-winning Indonesian village context, thereby filling a methodological gap in prior research that treated social capital as a background condition. It advances a culturally sensitive extension of Ostrom's collective action framework by demonstrating that *gotong royong* constitutes a non-Western institutional form with enforcement mechanisms more potent than those anticipated by the original framework. It also challenges the CBT literature's implicit prioritisation of bonding capital by demonstrating that bridging capital,

operationalised through multi-stakeholder networks, is the strongest predictor of collective governance capacity. For practitioners, the findings support a sequenced strategy: first, consolidate bonding capital through participatory governance reforms in BUMDes charters; second, cultivate bridging capital through partnerships with tour operators, universities and NGOs; third, leverage linking capital through competitive programmes such as ADWI. For the national tourism policy, the validated Social Capital Scale offers an instrument suitable for integration into desa wisata accreditation criteria, complementing existing infrastructure and marketing measures.

The study's limitations are three-fold. First, the single-case design, while analytically rich, constrains the statistical generalisability of quantitative findings; the path coefficients reported should be treated as illustrative of effect magnitudes pending replication in comparative multi-village samples. Second, the cross-sectional survey design cannot capture the temporal dynamics of social capital formation and the evolution of collective action. Third, social desirability bias in community members' survey responses may inflate the mean social capital scores. Future research should employ a comparative longitudinal design across multiple ADWI-winning and non-winning villages to test causal mechanisms and the moderating effects of institutional quality on the linking capital pathway.

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