

Community Service in the Perspective of Social Innovation: Efforts to Enhance Value Added and Competitiveness of MSMEs

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Abstract

This study aims to enrich the literature on community service by examining the role of social innovation in enhancing value added and the competitiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The study employs a qualitative approach using a literature review method and descriptive analysis. Data were collected from various sources, including Google Scholar and credible websites, covering the period from 1994 to 2026. From an initial pool of 50 articles, a rigorous selection process based on relevance and quality resulted in 31 articles for further analysis. The findings indicate that community service based on social innovation can enhance MSME capacity through participatory approaches, cross-sector collaboration, and the utilization of digital technology. The integration of theories such as Social Innovation Theory, Participatory Development Theory, and the Resource-Based View reinforces that program success is determined by active community involvement and the strengthening of innovation ecosystems. Furthermore, the analyzed case studies show that social innovation can increase product value added, expand market access, and sustainably strengthen MSME competitiveness. This study is expected to contribute to the development of more innovative, inclusive, and adaptive community service models in response to economic dynamics.

Keywords: Community Service, Social Innovation, MSMEs, Value Added, Competitiveness, Participation, Collaboration

Pengabdian Masyarakat dalam Perspektif Social Innovation: Upaya Meningkatkan Nilai Tambah dan Daya Saing UMKM

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menambah referensi terkait pengabdian masyarakat dengan mengkaji peran social innovation dalam meningkatkan nilai tambah dan daya saing Usaha Mikro, Kecil, dan Menengah (UMKM). Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode tinjauan pustaka (literature review) serta analisis deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan dari berbagai sumber seperti Google Scholar dan website kredibel yang relevan dalam rentang tahun 1994–2026. Dari hasil penelusuran awal sebanyak 50 artikel, dilakukan seleksi ketat berdasarkan relevansi dan kualitas sehingga diperoleh 31 artikel yang dianalisis lebih lanjut. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa pengabdian masyarakat berbasis social innovation mampu meningkatkan kapasitas UMKM melalui pendekatan partisipatif, kolaborasi lintas sektor, serta pemanfaatan teknologi digital. Integrasi teori seperti Social Innovation Theory, Participatory Development Theory, dan Resource-Based View memperkuat bahwa keberhasilan program ditentukan oleh keterlibatan aktif masyarakat dan penguatan ekosistem inovasi. Selain itu, studi kasus yang dianalisis menunjukkan bahwa inovasi sosial dapat meningkatkan nilai tambah produk, memperluas akses pasar, dan memperkuat daya saing UMKM secara berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi dalam pengembangan model pengabdian masyarakat yang lebih inovatif, inklusif, dan adaptif terhadap dinamika ekonomi.

Kata kunci: Pengabdian Masyarakat, Social Innovation, UMKM, Nilai Tambah, Daya Saing, Partisipasi, Kolaborasi

INTRODUCTION

Community service represents one of the core pillars of the tri dharma of higher education, playing a strategic role in driving social and economic transformation. In the context of local economic development, particularly within the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector, community service is no longer viewed as a one-way knowledge transfer activity but rather as a collaborative process oriented toward empowerment. This approach requires the integration of academic knowledge, community needs, and continuously evolving market dynamics. Therefore, a new perspective is needed to effectively bridge these elements. One relevant approach is social innovation, which emphasizes creative and sustainable solutions to socio-economic challenges.

The concept of social innovation has emerged as a response to the limitations of conventional approaches in addressing complex social problems. Social innovation encompasses innovations in processes, business models, and social interaction patterns that create shared value (Merino et al., 2026). In the context of community service, this approach enables deeper transformation by involving communities as active subjects rather than passive objects of development. This aligns with the inclusive development paradigm, which emphasizes the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement in generating relevant and sustainable solutions (Leal Filho et al., 2025). Thus, social innovation provides an appropriate framework for enhancing the effectiveness of community service programs.

MSMEs, as the backbone of the national economy, contribute significantly to employment generation and economic equity (Sutrisno, Diawati, et al., 2024; Sutrisno, Prabowo, et al., 2024). However, MSMEs still face various challenges, such as limited access to technology, low innovation capacity, and weak competitiveness in global markets. These conditions indicate that interventions through community service programs must be designed more strategically and contextually. The social innovation approach offers opportunities to address these challenges by developing solutions based on local needs and the inherent potential of MSME actors, thereby ensuring more tangible and sustainable impacts.

Enhancing MSME value added is a key indicator in measuring the success of empowerment programs. Value added includes aspects such as differentiation, branding, and production efficiency. From a social innovation perspective, value added can be increased through collaboration among academics, business actors, government, and communities (Sirolli et al., 2025). Such collaboration facilitates the exchange of knowledge and resources, strengthening MSME capacity. Moreover, this approach fosters the creation of an innovation ecosystem that supports sustainable business growth. Therefore, integrating social innovation into community service becomes highly important.

MSME competitiveness is another crucial aspect in facing increasingly intense market competition. Competitiveness is determined by the ability to adapt to market and technological changes (Alghamdi & Agag, 2024). In this regard, community service based

on social innovation can act as a catalyst in enhancing MSMEs' adaptive capabilities. Through training, mentoring, and network development, MSMEs can gain access to broader information and market opportunities. This, in turn, strengthens their bargaining position within economic value chains and significantly improves their competitiveness.

Previous studies reinforce that participatory approaches in community service are more effective than top-down approaches. Research by Chambers (1994) shows that active community involvement from the planning to evaluation stages enhances program success due to a sense of ownership and collective responsibility. This is supported by Krishna (2002), who found that communities involved in decision-making processes tend to be more adaptive, innovative, and capable of improving local economic welfare. From a social innovation perspective, Moulaert et al. (2013) emphasize that cross-sector collaboration among academia, government, and communities is a key factor in accelerating innovation processes and expanding program impact. Additionally, Mulgan (2006) highlights that participatory and collaborative social innovation produces more sustainable solutions because they are rooted in real community needs. Therefore, integrating social innovation principles into community service is essential, particularly in efforts to sustainably enhance MSME value added and competitiveness.

Nevertheless, the implementation of social innovation in community service still faces several challenges, including limited resources, lack of synergy among stakeholders, and low innovation capacity at the local level. These challenges indicate the need for comprehensive and integrated strategies in developing effective community service programs. Higher education institutions, as agents of change, play a crucial role in initiating and facilitating social innovation processes. Through research and community service based on societal needs, universities can become key drivers in creating impactful and innovative solutions. Strengthening institutional capacity is therefore essential.

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that community service from a social innovation perspective holds significant potential to enhance MSME value added and competitiveness. This approach opens opportunities to develop more inclusive and sustainable empowerment models. Therefore, this study is important to further examine how the implementation of social innovation in community service can provide tangible contributions to MSME development. The findings are expected to serve as a reference for academics, practitioners, and policymakers in designing more effective and impactful empowerment programs.

Community Service

Community service is one of the core pillars of the tri dharma of higher education, focusing on the application of knowledge to provide direct benefits to society (Lutfiyah, 2025). It represents an empowerment process that involves communities as active subjects in addressing social and economic problems. In the context of MSMEs, community service plays a crucial role in enhancing business capacity through training, mentoring, and facilitating access to resources. With an appropriate approach, community service can create sustainable change and strengthen the economic independence of communities.

Social Innovation

Social innovation refers to innovations aimed at creating social value through new solutions to societal problems (Titko et al., 2025). This innovation is not limited to products or technology but also includes business models, processes, and more effective and inclusive patterns of social interaction. In practice, social innovation emphasizes collaboration among various actors such as government, academia, the private sector, and communities. Its main objective is to generate sustainable social impact, including improving welfare and economic competitiveness, particularly for MSMEs.

MSMEs

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are an economic sector with a strategic role in the national economy, particularly in job creation and income distribution (Arjang et al., 2023; Sutrisno, Yani, et al., 2024). MSMEs are generally characterized by flexibility, reliance on local resources, and adaptability to market changes. However, they also face various challenges such as limited capital, low innovation capacity, and restricted market access. Support through community service and social innovation is therefore essential to enhance MSME performance and sustainability.

Value Added

Value added refers to the improvement in the quality or value of a product or service generated through production processes, innovation, or differentiation (Moreira et al., 2024). In the MSME context, value added can be achieved through improved product quality, more attractive design, strong branding, and production efficiency. Increasing value added is essential to enhance product competitiveness in both local and global markets. With higher value added, MSMEs can compete not only on price and quality but also on product uniqueness.

Competitiveness

Competitiveness is the ability of a business to survive and grow in the face of market competition (Farida & Setiawan, 2022). MSME competitiveness is determined by factors such as product quality, pricing, innovation, operational efficiency, and responsiveness to market changes. In the era of globalization and digitalization, competitiveness is also influenced by the ability to utilize technology and access information. Enhancing MSME competitiveness is therefore crucial for competing in international markets.

Participation

Participation refers to the active involvement of individuals or groups in a process, including planning, implementation, and evaluation stages (Syamsiyah et al., 2025). In community service, participation is a key element as it determines program success and sustainability. Community involvement ensures that programs are aligned with local needs and conditions. Moreover, participation fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility toward program outcomes, resulting in more significant and sustainable impacts.

Collaboration

Collaboration is the process of cooperation among various parties to achieve common goals by utilizing their respective resources (Verreyne et al., 2025). In the context of community service and social innovation, collaboration involves multiple actors such as higher education institutions, government, the private sector, and communities. It enables the exchange of knowledge, technology, and resources, thereby accelerating innovation processes. MSME empowerment programs can become more effective, efficient, and impactful when supported by strong collaboration.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a literature review method. This approach is chosen because the study aims to enrich references related to community service, particularly from the perspective of social innovation as an effort to enhance MSME value added and competitiveness. Thus, the study not only summarizes previous findings but also constructs a more comprehensive conceptual understanding of community service practices and their development based on social innovation. The qualitative approach allows for in-depth exploration of meanings, patterns, and relationships among concepts based on relevant literature sources.

Data collection was conducted through a literature search on Google Scholar and various credible websites, including reputable scientific journals and official institutional publications. The inclusion criteria consisted of articles relevant to community service, MSMEs, and social innovation, published between 1994 and 2026, and possessing reliable academic quality. From the initial search process, 50 scientific articles were identified. However, after a rigorous selection process based on relevance, methodological quality, and alignment with the research focus, 31 articles were included in the final analysis.

Data analysis in this study uses a qualitative descriptive analysis technique. The researcher examined, categorized, and interpreted findings from the selected literature to identify patterns, similarities, and differences across studies. The analysis process was conducted systematically through stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results are expected to contribute to enriching academic knowledge, particularly in expanding references related to community service, and to serve as a foundation for developing more innovative, participatory, and sustainable community service models.

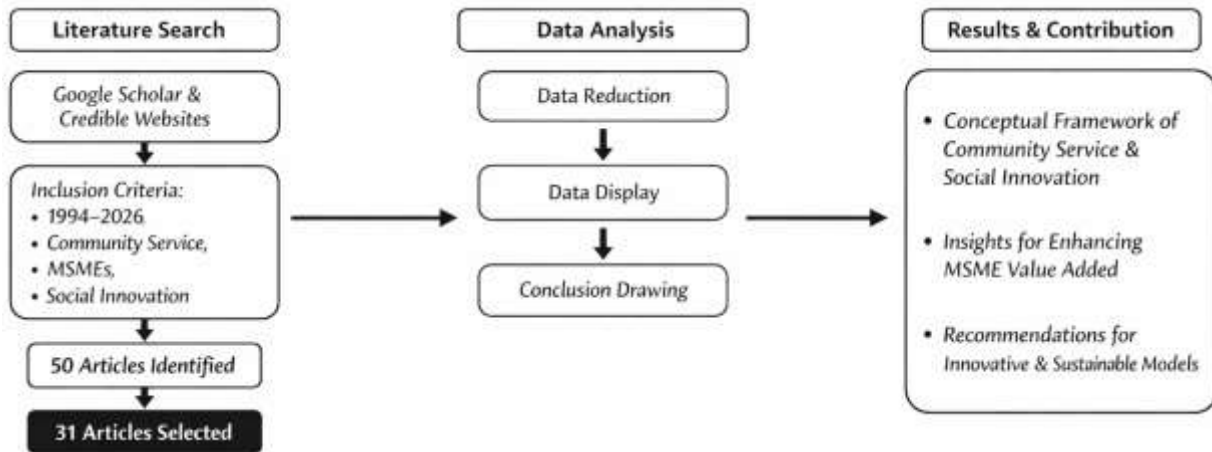


Figure 1. Research Methodology Flowchart

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This discussion is grounded in the understanding that community service, from a social innovation perspective, is no longer merely positioned as a linear knowledge transfer activity, but rather as a transformative process capable of driving sustainable and systemic socio-economic change. In the context of MSMEs, this approach becomes increasingly relevant as it responds to multidimensional structural challenges, such as limited access to competitive markets, low innovation capacity due to inadequate technological literacy, and weak integration within digital ecosystems. Furthermore, social innovation emphasizes the creation of social value through collaborative interactions among actors, including academia, government, business actors, and local communities (Jareh, 2025). Thus, community service programs have shifted from an instructive, top-down approach toward a participatory, contextual, adaptive, and needs-based approach. Within this framework, community service can be understood as a strategic instrument that strengthens social structures supporting sustainable MSME competitiveness.

Theoretically, this approach can be elaborated through Social Innovation Theory developed by (Mulgan, 2006), which emphasizes that social innovation emerges from the dynamic interaction between complex social needs and the collective capacity of society to create relevant and sustainable solutions. This theory broadens the concept of innovation to include social, institutional, and relational dimensions. From this perspective, the success of innovation is largely determined by the strength of social networks and the quality of collaboration among involved actors. In the context of community service, this implies that collaboratively and inclusively designed programs tend to generate broader impacts, as they integrate diverse resources and perspectives. Moreover, this approach strengthens the diffusion of innovation at the local level, enabling MSMEs to act as active agents of change. The integration of Social Innovation Theory thus provides a crucial foundation for understanding how community service enhances MSME value added and competitiveness sustainably.

In addition, Participatory Development Theory popularized by (Chambers, 1994) provides a strong conceptual foundation regarding the importance of active community

involvement throughout the development process. This theory critically rejects top-down approaches that often overlook local contexts and real community needs, replacing them with bottom-up approaches that position communities as the main subjects of development. In community service practice, participatory approaches enable MSME actors not only to become objects of intervention but also co-creators in designing innovative and contextual solutions. This process includes identifying problems based on local experiences, formulating strategies aligned with existing capacities, and conducting reflective program evaluations. Theoretically, such participation also contributes to the enhancement of social capital, including trust, norms, and social networks that support business sustainability. Participatory approaches strengthen the adaptive capacity and resilience of MSMEs in facing increasingly complex market dynamics.

Furthermore, the Resource-Based View (RBV) proposed by (Barney, 1991) offers a strategic perspective in understanding how MSMEs can build sustainable competitive advantage. This theory emphasizes that a firm's advantage is determined by its ability to manage resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN). In the MSME context, these resources are not always material but also include local knowledge, traditional skills, creativity, and organically developed social networks. Community service based on social innovation plays an important role in helping MSMEs identify, develop, and optimize these resources through interventions such as needs-based training, continuous mentoring, and facilitation of access to markets and technology. This approach strengthens product differentiation and strategic positioning within value chains, enabling MSMEs to compete more effectively in increasingly competitive markets.

Previous studies indicate that the integration of social innovation into community service significantly contributes to improving MSME performance, both economically and institutionally. A study by (Moulaert et al., 2013) highlights that collaboration among academia, government, and local communities creates an innovation ecosystem that accelerates value creation and continuously improves product quality. This finding aligns with the view that innovation does not occur linearly but through complex interactions among actors with diverse resources and interests (Han et al., 2022). Additionally, research by (Krishna, 2002) shows that active community participation strengthens business resilience through enhanced adaptive capacity and collective decision-making. Theoretically, these findings reinforce the argument that collaborative and participatory approaches are key determinants of successful community service programs, as they integrate social, economic, and institutional dimensions simultaneously within a social innovation framework.

The first case study can be analyzed through the MSME batik empowerment program in Pekalongan, which integrates digital design training and technology-based marketing as part of a social innovation strategy. This program involves synergy among universities, local government, and artisan communities in developing product innovation based on local wisdom (Rosada & Setyanto, 2025). Theoretically, this intervention reflects the concept of co-creation in social innovation, where MSME actors actively participate in the innovation process (Maziliauske, 2024). The results show increased value added through

more modern design differentiation without losing cultural identity, as well as expanded market access through digital platforms. Analytically, this case demonstrates that integrating technology within a social innovation framework can overcome traditional MSME limitations while strengthening competitiveness through a combination of product innovation and digital marketing strategies.

The second case study is observed in the development of coffee MSMEs in Toraja, which adopts a collaborative approach involving farmers, cooperatives, and research institutions within a community service framework. This program focuses on improving production quality through process standardization and strengthening branding based on geographical identity and local culture (Zulfan & Agung, 2025). From a theoretical perspective, this case can be explained through the integration of value chain theory and social innovation, where competitiveness is enhanced through improvements in distribution and marketing (Ambos et al., 2021). The results indicate that Toraja coffee has penetrated international markets with higher selling prices, reflecting success in creating value added through differentiation and product reputation. More deeply, this case shows that social innovation can strengthen MSMEs' position in global value chains through optimizing local identity and continuous quality improvement.

The third case study examines the digitalization of MSMEs in Batang, utilizing e-commerce platforms and social media as key instruments to expand market access. This program involves collaboration between technology startups, government, and academia in providing training and mentoring to MSME actors (Muhardono et al., 2025). From a theoretical standpoint, this reflects the integration of digital innovation and social innovation, where technology acts as an enabler to create broader social impact (Buck et al., 2025). The results show significant improvements in market reach, marketing efficiency, and sales volume. Analytically, the program's success is determined by the ability to build digital capacity and business literacy among MSME actors. This case confirms that integrating technology within a social innovation framework is an effective strategy for enhancing MSME competitiveness in the increasingly competitive digital economy.

However, the implementation of social innovation-based community service still faces various structural and cultural constraints. Low digital literacy, limited access to financing, and weak synergy among stakeholders remain major barriers to optimizing program impact. From a theoretical perspective, this condition can be explained through innovation system theory, which emphasizes that innovation success depends on the quality of interactions among elements within an ecosystem (Rabelo Neto et al., 2024). This implies that even well-designed programs will not yield optimal results without supportive institutional infrastructure, capable actors, and conducive policies. Additionally, unequal access to information and technology widens the gap between adaptive and lagging MSMEs. Therefore, a more comprehensive and systemic approach is required, focusing on strengthening the ecosystem as a whole to ensure that community service is effective, inclusive, and sustainable.

The first proposed solution is enhancing human resource capacity through continuous training designed contextually and based on the real needs of MSME actors. Theoretically, this aligns with human capital theory, which emphasizes that investment in knowledge, skills, and competencies directly impacts productivity and business performance (Aman-Ullah et al., 2022). Training should include the development of an innovative mindset, adaptability to change, and digital literacy, which is increasingly crucial in the modern era. Additionally, participatory and experiential learning approaches should be integrated to ensure effective knowledge transfer. This enables MSME actors to internalize and apply knowledge in their daily business practices, thereby enhancing resilience and competitiveness sustainably.

The second solution is strengthening cross-sector collaboration through the development of an inclusive and sustainable innovation ecosystem involving government, academia, business actors, and communities. Theoretically, this approach aligns with the quadruple helix model, which emphasizes the importance of interaction among four key actors in driving innovation and knowledge-based economic development (Mineiro et al., 2021). Such collaboration enables resource synergy in the form of knowledge, technology, and financing, accelerating innovation processes. Moreover, a strong ecosystem fosters continuous idea exchange and collective learning. In the MSME context, an integrated innovation ecosystem improves access to broader markets, strengthens business networks, and opens opportunities for strategic partnerships. Strengthening collaboration thus becomes a structural foundation for creating a conducive environment for competitive MSME development.

The third solution is leveraging digital technology as a strategic instrument to improve operational efficiency and expand MSME market reach. Theoretically, this relates to the concept of digital transformation, which emphasizes fundamental changes in how organizations create and deliver value through technology utilization (Verhoef et al., 2021). Digitalization includes system integration in production management, logistics, and customer service. By utilizing technology, MSMEs can increase productivity, reduce operational costs, and gain real-time access to market data. Furthermore, digitalization enables the creation of more flexible and responsive business models to changing consumer demands. The integration of technology into community service programs is therefore essential as a key driver of competitive advantage in the dynamic digital economy.

Overall, this discussion demonstrates that community service from a social innovation perspective plays a strategic role in driving MSME transformation toward greater innovation, adaptability, and competitiveness. The integration of various theoretical approaches—such as Social Innovation Theory, Participatory Development Theory, Resource-Based View, and the quadruple helix model—provides a strong conceptual foundation for understanding the complexity of MSME empowerment processes. Additionally, findings from previous studies and case analyses indicate that program success is largely determined by the ability to integrate community participation, cross-sector collaboration, and digital technology utilization. By addressing existing challenges

through appropriate, needs-based strategies, community service functions as an economic transformation instrument capable of creating value added and strengthening MSME competitiveness sustainably in the face of global challenges.

Table 1. Social Innovation-Based Community Service for MSME Development

No	Key Aspect	Main Findings	Implications
1	Community Service Paradigm	Shift from top-down to participatory, contextual, and needs-based approaches	Enhances program relevance and sustainability
2	Social Innovation Perspective	Innovation includes social, institutional, and relational dimensions	Strengthens collaboration and social value creation
3	MSME Challenges	Limited market access, low digital literacy, weak ecosystem integration	Constrains competitiveness and growth
4	Social Innovation Theory	Innovation emerges from interaction between social needs and collective capacity	Collaboration is critical for success
5	Participatory Development	MSMEs act as co-creators rather than passive recipients	Increases ownership, adaptability, and social capital
6	Resource-Based View (RBV)	Competitive advantage stems from unique (VRIN) resources	Encourages optimization of local knowledge and creativity
7	Prior Studies	Multi-actor collaboration enhances product quality and value creation	Supports sustainable innovation ecosystems
8	Batik Pekalongan Case	Integration of digital design and marketing	Improves product differentiation and market expansion
9	Toraja Coffee Case	Production standardization and local identity branding	Increases global market penetration and price value
10	Batang Digitalization Case	Use of e-commerce and social media	Improves marketing efficiency and sales volume
11	Implementation Barriers	Low digital literacy, limited financing access, weak stakeholder synergy	Requires systemic and ecosystem-based approaches
12	Human Capital Development	Continuous, needs-based training	Enhances productivity and competitiveness
13	Quadruple Helix Collaboration	Synergy among government, academia, business, and community	Accelerates innovation and resource integration
14	Digital Transformation	Technology improves efficiency and market access	Becomes a key driver of competitive advantage
15	Overall Conclusion	Integration of participation, collaboration, and digitalization determines success	Community service acts as a tool for MSME transformation

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that community service from a social innovation perspective is an effective approach to enhancing the value added and competitiveness of MSMEs. This approach emphasizes the importance of active community participation, cross-sector collaboration, and the optimal utilization of local resources. The integration of theories such as Social Innovation Theory, Participatory

Development Theory, and the Resource-Based View demonstrates that the success of community service programs depends not only on knowledge transfer but also on the ability to build inclusive and sustainable innovation ecosystems. Furthermore, findings from previous studies and the analyzed case studies confirm that this approach can drive MSMEs to become more adaptive, innovative, and competitive in the market.

The implications of this study cover both theoretical and practical aspects. Theoretically, this research contributes to enriching the literature on community service by integrating the social innovation perspective as a more comprehensive analytical framework. Practically, the findings can serve as a reference for higher education institutions, governments, and practitioners in designing more participatory and sustainability-oriented community service programs. Moreover, this approach encourages synergy among stakeholders in building a stronger and more competitive MSME ecosystem, particularly in addressing the challenges of the digital economy and globalization.

This study has several limitations that need to be considered. First, it employs a literature review method, making it highly dependent on the quality and availability of the analyzed sources. Second, the number of articles is limited to 31 publications selected through a rigorous process, which means other relevant studies may not have been included. Third, this study does not involve direct empirical data from the field, so the findings are primarily conceptual and descriptive. Therefore, the generalization of these results should be approached with caution, especially in contexts with different characteristics.

Based on these limitations, future research is recommended to combine literature review approaches with empirical studies to obtain more comprehensive results. Further studies should also expand the scope of literature and examine more deeply the implementation of social innovation across various MSME sectors. Additionally, practitioners and policymakers are encouraged to develop more structured community service programs that are based on local needs and supported by digital technology and cross-sector collaboration. In this way, community service can move beyond being merely a formal activity and truly deliver tangible impacts in enhancing MSME value added and competitiveness in a sustainable manner.

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