

Adaptation of Agile Project Management to Small Scale Projects in the Indonesian MSME Sector

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ABSTRACT

Agile Project Management (APM) offers a flexible and adaptive approach to managing projects, making it particularly relevant for the dynamic environment of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia. This study explores the adaptation of APM for small-scale projects within the MSME sector through qualitative analysis. Data were collected from five informants actively involved in project management and analyzed using N-VIVO software. The findings highlight that APM can enhance adaptability, team collaboration, and customer satisfaction. However, challenges such as limited resources, resistance to change, and lack of expertise were identified. Strategies, including incremental adoption, training, and external consultancy, were proposed to overcome these barriers. This research contributes to the understanding of Agile's applicability in MSMEs, offering practical insights for practitioners and policymakers to foster innovation and competitiveness in the sector.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Agile Project Management (APM) offers a flexible, collaborative, and customer-focused approach to help Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia overcome challenges like limited resources and a competitive market. APM enhances adaptability, operational efficiency, and responsiveness to market fluctuations. It streamlines financial processes, improves decision-making through iterative planning, and integrates financial literacy training and

SAK EMKM standards to boost financial reporting and capital access [1]. By fostering continuous learning and aligning training programs with APM principles, MSMEs can enhance technical skills, digital marketing, innovation, and collaboration, promoting long-term growth and resilience [2], [3]. Additionally, APM drives innovation and creativity for competitive advantage through product differentiation, creative marketing, and collaboration with institutions, ensuring sustained progress [4].

Agile Project Management (APM) is particularly advantageous for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) due to its flexibility, iterative processes, and customer collaboration focus, enabling swift adaptation to market changes and resource constraints. The iterative nature of Agile allows MSMEs to deliver value incrementally, essential in resource-limited and dynamic market environments. By emphasizing adaptability, Agile helps MSMEs respond quickly to technological advancements and changing customer needs, as seen in industries like HVAC, where rapid iterations and feedback loops are crucial [4], [5]. APM also prioritizes customer involvement throughout the project lifecycle, ensuring alignment with market demands and fostering innovation by integrating continuous feedback [6]. Additionally, Agile's iterative approach mitigates risks early in projects, reducing delays and failures, while its emphasis on cross-functional teams cultivates creativity and innovation, enabling MSMEs to experiment and deliver high-quality products efficiently [3], [4].

However, existing studies have largely focused on the implementation of Agile in large organizations or technology-driven industries, leaving a gap in understanding its applicability in small-scale projects within sectors such as MSMEs.

This study aims to explore the adaptation of Agile Project Management practices to small-scale projects in the Indonesian MSME sector. By examining the experiences and insights of practitioners and stakeholders, this research seeks to identify how Agile principles can be effectively tailored to the unique context of MSMEs. The study also investigates the challenges encountered during the adaptation process and strategies to overcome them.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Agile Project Management: Principles and Practices

Agile Project Management (APM) is a dynamic approach emphasizing flexibility, collaboration, and iterative progress, rooted in the

Agile Manifesto principles of prioritizing individuals and interactions, working solutions, customer collaboration, and responsiveness to change. These principles enable teams to adapt quickly to evolving requirements, deliver incremental value, and foster continuous improvement while reducing risks and enhancing collaboration. Agile consistently outperforms traditional methodologies in dynamic IT environments by offering greater flexibility, faster project delivery, and higher customer satisfaction through iterative cycles and stakeholder engagement [7]. Its adaptability makes it particularly effective for large-scale IT projects, as it breaks down complex requirements into manageable components, allowing for frequent feedback and realignment of objectives [1]. Despite its advantages, Agile adoption faces challenges like cultural resistance and scaling complexities, which can be addressed by fostering openness and collaboration [8]. Cross-functional teams enhance productivity and customer satisfaction by integrating specialists from diverse fields, while practices like Scrum significantly improve team productivity, communication, and morale, enabling better adaptability and shorter time-to-market for software products [2], [9].

2.2 The Applicability of Agile in Non-Software Sectors

Agile Project Management (APM) has proven effective beyond software development, succeeding in sectors like manufacturing, education, and healthcare by leveraging adaptive planning and stakeholder engagement. Customization is key in addressing industry-specific challenges, such as improving patient outcomes in healthcare through flexibility and responsiveness, despite resistance to change and training needs [10], [11]. In HVAC, Agile frameworks like Scrum and Kanban drive innovation and risk mitigation by enabling rapid adaptation

to technological advancements [10]. Agile's emphasis on customer collaboration and iterative development fosters innovation across industries, helping organizations remain competitive by quickly adapting to market feedback [11], [12]. Successful implementation requires a cooperative organizational culture and strong teamwork to overcome challenges in non-software contexts [1].

2.3 *The Role of MSMEs in Economic Development and Research Gap*

Agile Project Management (APM) offers a promising approach for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia to address structural and operational challenges. By emphasizing adaptability, resource optimization, and collaboration, Agile methodologies can enhance project outcomes, especially in small-scale contexts. Agile's flexibility allows MSMEs to adapt to market changes and customer needs, ensuring competitiveness in Indonesia's dynamic business environment [13]. Additionally, Agile practices focus on efficient resource utilization, crucial for resource-constrained MSMEs, while promoting collaboration and communication within teams to drive innovation and improve product development [1], [3], [7], [13], [14]. Despite its potential benefits, empirical research on Agile adoption in Indonesian MSMEs remains limited, highlighting the need for further exploration of this approach.

Implementing Agile in MSMEs faces significant challenges, including low technological adoption, human resource constraints, and financial limitations. Many MSMEs struggle with integrating digital tools required for Agile practices and lack skilled human resources to execute these methodologies effectively [1], [3]. Financial barriers also restrict access to necessary tools and training, further complicating adoption [5], [14]. To overcome these challenges, MSMEs can leverage AI and digital tools

to streamline processes and improve efficiency, foster innovation through training and workshops, and enhance digital literacy among owners and employees to effectively use Agile methodologies.

While existing literature provides valuable insights into the principles and applications of Agile Project Management, there is a lack of research on its adaptation to the unique context of MSMEs in Indonesia. Specifically, how Agile can be tailored to address the resource constraints and market dynamics faced by MSMEs is underexplored. Furthermore, there is limited understanding of the challenges and best practices associated with implementing Agile methodologies in small-scale projects.

3. METHOD

3.1 *Research Design*

The study adopts a qualitative research design, which is suitable for understanding complex phenomena and capturing the perspectives of participants in their natural settings. By focusing on the experiences and insights of MSME practitioners, this research seeks to explore how Agile principles can be tailored to address the unique characteristics of small-scale projects in the Indonesian MSME sector.

3.2 *Informants*

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select five informants with direct experience in managing projects within MSMEs, chosen based on their active involvement in project management roles within Indonesian MSMEs, familiarity with Agile methodologies or related practices, and representation from diverse industries to ensure varied perspectives. The selected informants, comprising business owners, project managers, and consultants, provided a comprehensive understanding of Agile adaptation across different organizational contexts.

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, allowing for flexibility in exploring key themes while maintaining a consistent framework. The interviews focused on the informants' understanding of Agile principles, current project management practices in their organizations, experiences and challenges in adapting Agile methodologies, and perceived benefits and limitations of using Agile for small-scale projects. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was conducted either face-to-face or via online communication platforms, depending on the informants' availability, with recordings made with their consent to ensure accuracy and reliability.

3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using N-VIVO software, a qualitative data analysis tool that facilitates the organization and coding of textual data. The analysis process involved transcribing interviews verbatim to create a comprehensive textual dataset, coding the data using both deductive approaches derived from existing Agile Project Management literature and inductive approaches emerging from the data itself, grouping the codes into categories to identify recurring patterns and develop key themes, and interpreting these themes to gain insights into the adaptation of Agile practices, challenges encountered, and strategies for successful implementation.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

a. Awareness and Understanding of Agile Principles

All five informants demonstrated a basic understanding of Agile principles, such as flexibility, iterative progress, and customer collaboration. However, the depth of understanding varied. Informants who had prior exposure to formal Agile training were more confident in

applying these principles, while others relied on informal knowledge gained through experience.

One informant from the retail sector stated:

"Agile means being able to respond to changes quickly, especially when customer needs shift. For us, it's about adapting our product offerings as fast as possible."

b. Current Project Management Practices

Most informants indicated that their project management practices were traditional, relying on fixed plans and linear processes. However, elements of Agile, such as regular team meetings and iterative task completion, were already being practiced informally. This indicates an opportunity to formalize these practices into a structured Agile framework.

c. Benefits of Agile for MSMEs

Informants highlighted several benefits of adopting Agile methodologies, including:

1. Agile practices enabled MSMEs to respond quickly to market changes.
2. Daily stand-up meetings and retrospective reviews fostered better communication among team members.
3. Iterative delivery allowed for frequent customer feedback, improving the quality of products and services.

An informant from the food processing industry noted:

"By delivering in small increments and getting feedback from customers, we were able to refine our products faster than before."

d. Challenges in Agile Adaptation

The study identified several challenges faced by MSMEs in adapting Agile methodologies:

1. MSMEs often lack the financial and human resources to implement Agile frameworks effectively.
2. Employees accustomed to traditional methods were hesitant to embrace Agile practices.
3. The absence of trained Agile practitioners made it difficult to execute Agile principles correctly.

e. Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

Informants proposed several strategies to address the challenges of Agile adaptation:

1. Introducing Agile practices gradually to allow teams to adjust over time.
2. Providing Agile training to employees and managers.
3. Engaging Agile experts to guide the initial implementation phase.

4.2 Discussion

a. Relevance of Agile in MSMEs

The findings align with existing literature on the applicability of Agile methodologies in resource-constrained environments, emphasizing their adaptability and focus on customer collaboration as key strengths. This makes Agile a suitable approach for MSMEs operating in volatile markets, where flexibility and responsiveness are essential. The study confirms that even small-scale organizations can reap significant benefits from Agile practices when tailored to their specific needs, highlighting the potential for iterative processes and stakeholder engagement to drive resilience and innovation.

Agile methodologies enable MSMEs to swiftly adapt to market changes, maintain competitiveness, and navigate economic shocks through iterative product development and adaptive decision-

making [14]. Continuous customer collaboration fosters satisfaction and innovation, while cross-functional teams and digital tools enhance decision-making efficiency, providing a competitive edge in dynamic environments [3], [7], [13]. However, challenges such as cultural resistance and scaling complexities can impede Agile adoption, underscoring the need for strategic commitment and investments to overcome these hurdles and fully leverage Agile's potential [14].

b. Practical Implications

The insights from this study highlight practical recommendations for MSMEs:

1. MSMEs should modify Agile practices to align with their operational scale and industry requirements. For example, simplified Scrum frameworks can be used to manage smaller teams.
2. Capacity-building initiatives are essential to familiarize employees with Agile principles and practices.
3. MSMEs should adopt Agile incrementally to minimize disruption and build confidence among employees.

c. Addressing Challenges

The challenges identified in this study resonate with the barriers reported in prior research on Agile adoption. However, the use of strategies such as incremental adoption and external consultancy offers a practical roadmap for overcoming these barriers. This underscores the importance of context-sensitive approaches to Agile implementation.

4.3 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the limited body of research on Agile Project Management in the MSME sector, particularly in developing economies like

Indonesia. It provides empirical evidence on the benefits, challenges, and best practices of Agile adaptation in small-scale projects.

The findings emphasize the need for further research on Agile methodologies in diverse organizational contexts and offer a foundation for future studies on the scalability and sustainability of Agile practices in MSMEs.

5. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the potential of Agile Project Management (APM) as an effective methodology for small-scale projects within the Indonesian MSME sector. Agile's principles of adaptability, collaboration, and iterative delivery address many challenges faced by MSMEs, such as limited resources and volatile market conditions. While the

study found substantial benefits in terms of enhanced project outcomes and customer satisfaction, significant barriers to adoption remain, including resistance to change and lack of expertise.

Practical strategies, such as incremental adoption of Agile practices, employee training programs, and engaging external consultants, were identified as effective solutions to these challenges. The study underscores the importance of tailoring Agile methodologies to the unique context of MSMEs to ensure successful implementation. This research provides valuable insights for MSME practitioners and policymakers, emphasizing the role of Agile in fostering innovation and operational efficiency. Future studies could expand on these findings by exploring the long-term sustainability of Agile practices and their scalability across different industries within the MSME sector.

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