

## The Role of Social Capital and Knowledge Capital for Freelance Creative Workers in Audiovisual Industry

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### **Abstract**

*This study explains how capitals shape the survival strategy of freelance creative workers who work in a precarious situations in the commercial audiovisual industry. This study was conducted with a qualitative approach. Through in-depth interviews with freelance creative workers, online observations, and digital data collection, this study shows that the survival strategy of the workers can be explained further based on capital analysis focused on social capital and knowledge capital as the recognized and valued capital in the field. Both the social and knowledge capital of the workers, accompanied by workers' capacity to accumulate and convert them continuously, are relevant in shaping workers' survival strategy, which leads to the establishment of a positive reputation and capacity enhancement. This eventually leads them to gain employability and occupy strategic positioning, reflected in high bargaining power and work opportunities in the industry sustainably, as it becomes their alternative job security to survive amidst precarious conditions.*

**Keywords:** *freelance creative workers, commercial audiovisual industry, social capital, knowledge capital, the survival strategy*

**Paper type:** *Research paper*

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Received: 07 September 2022; Received in revised form 26 December 2022; Accepted: 30 April 2023; Available online: 30 April 2023

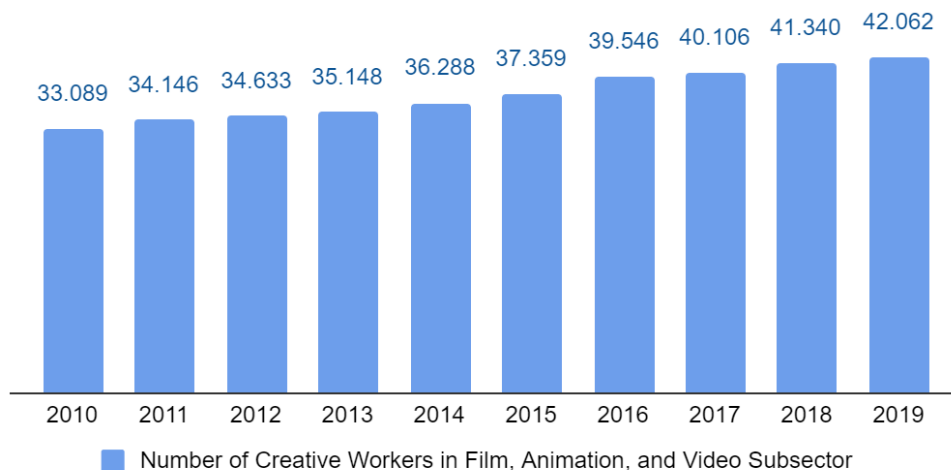
**Cite this document:** Ramadhiani, Fadhilia Resti & Ricardi S. Adnan (2023). The Role of Social Capital and Knowledge Capital for Freelance Creative Workers in Audiovisual Industry. *The Journal of Society and Media*, 7(1), 19-48. DOI: 10.26740/jsm.v7n1.p19-48

## INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, the creative industries in Indonesia have experienced rapid development, especially in the commercial audiovisual industry represented by the film, animation, and video sub-sector. This rapid development was indicated by the continuous increase in creative workers in its subsector in the last decade, reaching 42.062 people in 2019, as shown in Figure 1 (The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of Republic Indonesia 2020). Data retrieved from the Creative Economy Agency of The Republic of Indonesia (2019) also showed that the GDP growth rate of the film, animation, and video sub-sector had reached 10,18% in 2018, making it the second-highest growth in the creative economy after the television and radio subsector. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of The Republic of Indonesia (2021) then recognized the potentiality of the creative industries, particularly the commercial audiovisual industry, to boost the national economy by absorbing large amounts of labor. This support is also manifested by inserting its sub-sector on the priority list (Creative Economy Agency of The Republic of Indonesia 2019; Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia 2021).

**Figure 1.**

**The Growth of Creative Workers in Film, Animation, and Video Subsector in Indonesia 2010-2019**



*Source: Data from The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia (2020) has been reprocessed*

There has been a dominant feature of the commercial audiovisual industry that establishes its functional need for flexibility, hence makes a considerable distinction from the other formal sectors (Alacovska 2018; Blair 2001; Comunian and England 2020; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). The audiovisual production process usually takes place under the auspices of the production house as the business entity and capital holders, with its production work largely transferred down to the workforce, which consists of networks of creative workers. However, these creative workers perform a subset of required production activities without being permanently bound to the production house. Pursuing this further, most workers employed in this industry are freelancers who are outsourced or recruited on a project-by-project basis according to the needs of the production. This considers that the production house emphasizes the production cost efficiency and its functional needs to adapt and respond to the changing market with the demand for originality, novelty, and uniqueness of its products (Banks 2010; Menger 2006; Hewison and Kalleberg 2013).

This work organization system ultimately places most of the creative workers in this industry in flexible and non-standardized working mode. They become casual workers or freelancers who work flexibly and face discontinuous shifting between employment and unemployment as they move in and move out of the short-term work project. While the number of workers, as shown in Figure 1, has proven to be increased, this indicates that the growth of workers in this industry corresponds to the growth of precarious workers (Comunian and England 2020; Hewison and Kalleberg 2013), as explained by Standing (2011) as the precariat. This term is defined by several labor-related insecurities, including the absence of stable employment, no clear regulations regarding work recruitment and dismissal procedure, and income insecurity. As a result, the investigation of freelance creative workers' survivability in this industry, including how they make their survival strategy and navigate this industry to gain employability in this precarious non-standard work system, is explored further in this study.

Previous studies which discussed the survivability of freelance creative workers amidst the insecurity faced in the industry were explained by referring to three factors. First, the workers' survival strategy used their social networks (Blair

2001; Hermes et al. 2017; Mrozowicki and Trappman 2021; Norback and Sthyre 2019; Wong and Chow 2020). Second, the utilization of various knowledge and competencies workers possess (Dowd and Pinheiro 2013; Lingo and Tepper 2013; Throsby and Zednik 2011; Stokes 2021). Third, the ability of workers to do multiple jobs-holding (Campbell 2020; Throsby and Zednik 2011; Umney and Kretsos 2015). However, those studies have yet to fully elaborate on how those factors can be placed as capital that can be utilized by freelance creative workers to form their long-term survival strategy in the audiovisual industry. Owing to that, this study aims to explain how capitals shape the survival strategy of freelance creative workers in the audiovisual industry, whose structural aspects tend to put workers in precarious situations.

The result of this study found that the survival strategy of freelance creative workers in the commercial audiovisual industry can be explained further based on an analysis of capital, which is summed up in social capital and knowledge capital as the recognized and valued capital in this field. Both the social capital and knowledge capital of the workers, accompanied by the capacity of workers to trade and accumulate their capital continuously, are deployed in the pursuit of an advantage in this industry, which leads to the establishment of a positive reputation and individuals' capacity enhancement over the span of their career. This eventually leads them to gain employability in this industry and later perpetuates them to survive and occupy strategic positioning in the industry, which is reflected in high bargaining power and getting more access to work projects opportunities sustainably.

The study of the survival strategy of freelance creative workers with their employability in this industry cannot be separated from the socially structured context in which they are embedded (Delva, Forrier, and De Cuyper 2021; Ritzer 2011). Therefore, the survival strategy of freelance creative workers in obtaining employability will be emphasized from a relational perspective by using Bourdieu's conceptual framework, which includes the concept of field and capital (Bourdieu 1986; Ritzer 2011). A field is a structured space where actors compete to occupy their strategic position. The ability of actors to navigate the field and then compete for their strategic position in the field is determined by the possession of the appropriate capital available to them as the power resources. Capital is defined as the form of power resources owned by actors. The concept of capital used in this

study is discussed in four forms. The first three forms of capital are the initial fundamental capital which consists of economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital (Bourdieu 1986; Ritzer 2011).

Economic capital refers to the material assets of actors. Meanwhile, cultural capital points to capital that are embodied in actors by being manifested in possession of knowledge, style of speech, and values, then also being manifested in the form of objects (objectified) through ownership of high-value products, then also manifested in an institutionalized form which refers to academic status or degree from a formal institution. Social capital refers to the resources linked to the possession of social networks or group membership, which involves mutual acquaintance and recognition. This social capital is discussed further by emphasizing social networks (Granovetter 1983) and trust (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Putnam 1993). The fourth capital is knowledge capital which is rooted in the concept of human capital Becker (1962). Knowledge capital points to the existence of knowledge and skill as investment assets, which also represent capacity within an individual level to get involved in the economic sector.

Given the change in the commercial audiovisual industry's employment arrangements, which exhibits flexibility and non-standard working mode, this point is supported by the concept of boundaryless career and outsourcing. The concept of a boundaryless career described by Arthur and DeFilippi (1994) echoes the condition of freelance creative workers in the commercial audiovisual industry nowadays who do not have a long-term association with one organization or employer. They transcend the boundary of a single employer, organization, or project throughout their careers, enabling them to explore and contribute significantly to their competencies (Arthur and DeFilippi 1994; Bridgstock 2005). This implies that freelance creative workers are self-managed subjects and must be employable and sustainably throughout their careers. Boundaryless career and its non-standardized work setting are closely related to the outsourcing concept since it is the manifestation of production houses implementing the principle of outsourcing by transferring production works to a network of freelance creative workers (Dolgui and Proth 2013; Standing 2011).

## **METHODS**

This study used a qualitative approach to investigate the survival strategy of freelance creative workers in the commercial audiovisual industry. Primary data was gathered through in-depth online interviews with eight freelance creative workers, consisting of three categories, starting from managerial workers (producer), primary creative personnel (director and assistant director), and craft and technical workers (director of photography, ass. cameraman, art director, and editor), aged between 28-41 years old, live in Jakarta Metropolitan Area, and having 4-22 years of freelancing experience in commercial audiovisual production. Online in-depth interview was used to dig deeper into their survival experience and the perceived challenges and opportunities they face when getting work and navigating this industry. Another in-depth online interview was conducted with an executive producer from a production house in Jakarta as a supporting informant to understand how this industry works from the capitalist standpoint. To supplement the results of in-depth interviews, the researcher also conducted online observations via the Internet and social media by tracing the existence of production houses and portfolios and production project work activities shared by freelance creative workers through their social media accounts.

Secondary data collection such as journal articles, digital text-based and visual-based data obtained from the Internet and social media. Digital text-based data was obtained from the commentary section of the Instagram account @PejuangInvoice, a digital community of freelance creative workers in the commercial audiovisual industry, which is usually filled with their working-related blabber and discussion. It was explored further to gain an understanding of various experienced dynamics and survival strategies of freelance creative workers as additional findings to this study. Then, visual-based data was obtained in the form of pictures or videos taken from their social media, such as their showreels and Instagram posts, representing the freelancer creative workers' involvement in production work and portfolio-building. Primary and secondary data were collected and then processed using NVivo software to categorize the data into codes and subcodes. The data was then analyzed using a conceptual framework that corresponded to the findings.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Freelance Creative Workers in Commercial Audiovisual Production Organizations**

The commercial audiovisual industry is established with production houses as business entities that lead and fund commercial-based audiovisual works, such as TVC (TV Commercial), digital ads, music videos, etc. Those commercial audiovisual works have become commodities that have unique and original value in the market since it is a part of the principle of creative economy (Banks 2010; Menger 2006). As a result, the production of commercial audiovisual work is always required to produce distinct and innovative works according to the market needs. They are required to align and adapt quickly to the business context with its great uncertain circumstances, both in terms of production prospects that will unfold and the needs of its various workforce and resources, while also having to maintain its cost efficiency. In line with the study's findings, the principles of flexibility and efficiency, which are applied by production houses, give rise to the implementation of temporary-based work projects and the workers recruited through outsourcing based on production needs. As a result of this mechanism, most of the creative workers are placed as freelancers or contingent workers who are assembled on a temporary project-based system.

Every production project holds socially embedded components. This considers that the production of audiovisual works tends to operate within collective work, involving a varied network of freelance creative workers in conjunction. These freelance creative workers fit into three categories of a division of labor, in line with what has been suggested by Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011). First, the workers in the primary creative personnel category give fresh and innovative ideas for audiovisual works. Then, the ideas are further developed and executed into fruition as real commodities by the inputs of workers in the craft and technical categories, with all the managerial aspects of the production being managed by managerial workers. However, goes beyond these divisions of labor, the findings of this study recognized how the input from the workers in each category varied based on their expertise-based power, thereby showing how each category of workers also has its detailed class classification or categorization, consisting of

workers in high skilled/expert class, skilled/junior assistant, and workers in unskilled/semi-skilled class. This represents the hierarchy and varying degrees of power between the workers. The detailed categorization of these workers in each category is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.**  
**Class Classification of Freelance Creative Workers in the Commercial  
Audiovisual Industry**

Class A (High-Skilled/Expert)	Class B (Skilled/Junior Assistant)	Class C (Unskilled/Semi-skilled)
<b>Managerial</b>		
Producer	Line Producer/Production Asst.	Crafties/General Assistant
<b>Primary Creative Personnel</b>		
Director	Asst to the director, 1st Asst. Director, and 2nd Asst. Director	Script Continuity
<b>Craft and Technical</b>		
Art Director: Director of Photography (DoP), Video Editor; etc	Asst. Art Director; Set Designer; Property Master; Asst. Camera (Cameraperson); Junior Editor, etc.	Property Buyer; Runner; DIT (Digital Imaging Technician); Cable Man, etc.

*Source: Authors' Research Findings (2022), has been Reprocessed*

Based on Table 1, the highest or upper-class position refers to class A, which consists of freelance creative workers who occupy high-skilled positions or experts. In the managerial category, class A consists of producers. Then, the primary creative personnel category consists of directors, while the craft and technical category consists of several other heads in production, such as the Director of Photography (DoP), art director, video editor, etc. Besides that, class B stands for freelance creative workers who occupy skilled/junior assistant positions. Class B also consists of workers in three categories, including those who occupy the positions of line producer and production assistant, assistant director, assistant art director, set designer, junior video editor, and assistant. Camera and other positions which work directly under the supervision of high-skilled or expert workers in class A. Lastly, class C consists of workers with little know-how, knowledge, or

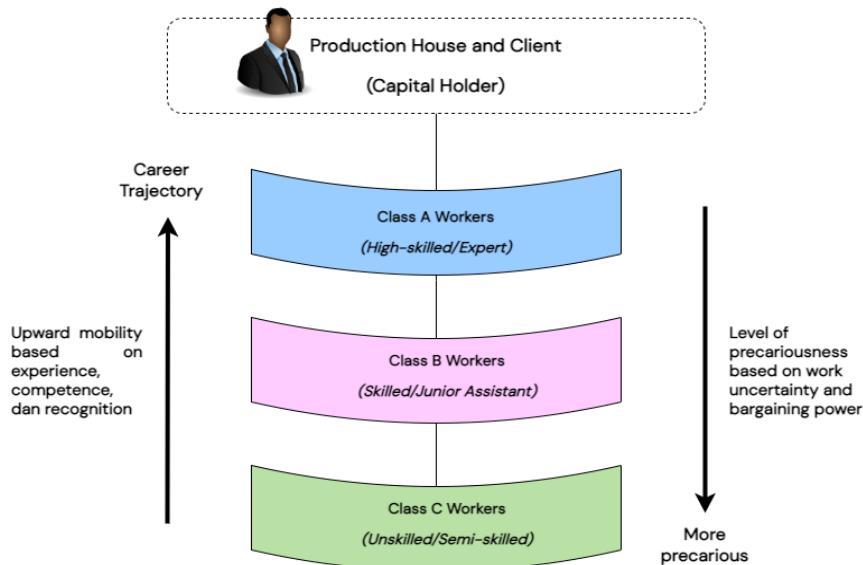


expertise, considering that the production project is also combined with the inputs from workers in the unskilled/semi-skilled class in each category of workers. Class C consists of crafting/general assistants in the managerial category, script continuity positions which hold the lowest position in the primary creative personnel category, then the runner, DIT (Data Imaging Technician), property buyer, cable man, etc., which sit in the craft and technical category.

Given the diverse network of freelance creative workers in a collaborative work production project, the mechanism for recruiting its workers is carried out informally. This informal recruitment is usually carried out in various ways, mainly through direct contact or ‘calling’, word-of-mouth recommendation, and portfolio-matching through social media. This informal recruitment is considered effective as a mechanism for assembling a production project together with its suitable workers in terms of skills, experience, and personal characteristics of the workers when working in conjunction to reduce uncertainty.

The mechanism for recruiting freelance creative workers into a production project usually occurs sequentially within a tree-like model. The person who sits directly in a higher hierarchy or position determines whether certain workers who work under them are recruited to work on a project. Pursuing this further, this means that the figure of the employer does not only refer to the production house or client as the capital holder but also refers to the figure of work colleagues or acquaintances who occupy a higher hierarchy in a work project where they can select and present people to work under them as long as they fit with the project. The process of workers' informal recruitment can be further observed through the schematic class reproduction of freelance creative workers in the commercial audiovisual industry, as seen in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.**  
**Class Reproduction of Freelance Creative Workers in the Commercial**  
**Audiovisual Industry**



*Source: Authors' Research Findings (2022), has been Reprocessed*

As seen in Figure 2, the process of organizing the freelance creative workers in a commercial audiovisual production project begins with its recruitment process, which is in line with its class reproduction. The recruitment process usually starts with a creative brief or storyboard as a form of creative production command proposed by a client or creative agency to the production house. The production house then transfers the project work to the workers by outsourcing them to perform required production activities. The process of recruiting freelance creative workers usually begins first with the producer, then continues with the director since they occupy the highest class in a production which sits at class A or the high-skilled category. Besides that, they also lead the running of production in general since they both in a row sit as the managerial and the primary creative personnel workers who manage and deliver creative ideas during the production process.

Each producer and director continue to recruit other workers in the managerial category and primary creative personnel, which occupy the skilled/junior assistants (class B) who will work under them, such as the line producers, production assistants, assistant directors, and so on. Then, the producer and director will further discuss recruiting other workers in high-skilled/expert

positions (class A) who occupy in craft and technical category, which includes the DoP, art director, editor, and so on. Most craft and technical workers who occupy high-skilled positions in a production project are important since they refer to key personnel who can develop creative ideas and bring them to fruition into real commodities.

Similar to high-skilled workers or expert (class A workers) who sit in the managerial and primary creative personnel category, class A workers in the craft and technical category who has been recruited into the production team will also recruit the class B workers who occupy skilled/junior assistant positions in craft and technical category to work under them. For example, the DoP and art director will staff its subordinates, such as the assistant camera, assistant art director, property master, and so on. Since it is adopted nearly as a tree-like model, this recruitment continues to proceed in such a way until it sequentially branches to reach class C workers, who occupy the lowest position consisting of unskilled/semi-skilled workers.

Pursuing this further, this mechanism, in general, echoes previous studies, particularly Blair (2001; 2003), which stated how freelance creative workers in this industry heavily relied on two main principles. It is 'it's all down to whom you know' which highlighted networking as its notable feature to get to work and accompanied by its recognized work performance ratings in their track record as described in 'you're only as good as your last job' principle.

### **Freelance Creative Workers Classification and Its Precariousness**

From the findings, the class classification of freelance creative workers in this industry is reproduced not only based on the hierarchy in its organizational structure but also from the combination of competence, experience, as well as the recognition of its workers built on the prestige of the worker's position. Based on the results of the classification in Figure 2, class A workers who occupy their positions as high-skilled/expert workers are seen as workers who sit in the upper class and hold more strategic positions. They tend to have higher bargaining power and are more easily recognized by the business entity or capital holder due to their prestige, competence, and experience. Hence they occupy the main prominent

position in the production process, which easily perpetuates them to get employed in other projects. The Class B workers are seen to be in a position in the field as transitional, but they tend to scale the ladder to gain higher-paid roles and move upward gradually to Class A, for example, the ongoing transition from a director assistant to the director, the assistant art director to art director, etc. Meanwhile, class C workers occupy the lowest class or position since it is usually filled with entry-level workers who have just got access to industry and those who are positioned as unskilled/semi-skilled workers.

However, due to the very fluid and dynamic nature of the commercial audiovisual industry, the classification of the workers is found to be non-mutually exclusive. This class classification cannot be defined solely by the amount of income of the workers in each class, considering that the amount of income of each worker in each class tends to be highly unstable. Moreover, it is also possible for workers in each of these classes to be able to move across classes or be in various classes at the same time, considering that the movement of workers in this industry is very dynamic, relying on the level of competence, experience, as well as the recognition and trust generated in the workers.

Considering its classification, the commercial audiovisual industry, in general, however, still tends to put its workers from class A to class C in precarious situations. Working on short-term projects puts its workers face discontinuous shifting between employed and unemployed at unpredictable times. However, the class C workers are seen to be involved in a more precarious condition than the class A and class B, considering that apart from dealing with job uncertainty, they also have low limits in bargaining power and are easily replaceable due to the lack of competence, experience, and notable recognition in the industry. Class C workers tend to be on a treadmill of low-paid work, as this was also revealed by several interviewees who noted how they often worked for free or low pay when they started off their career in this industry as class C workers who were unskilled/semi-skilled. However, due to its non-mutually exclusive classification, findings also reported that this condition also applied to some class A or class B workers who were just trusted to start off their early career in the upper and upper-middle class. They noted that although they were trusted enough to get positioned in the upper and upper-middle class category during their early career, it did not put them to easily negotiate their bargaining power since they were still the 'weak players',

endowed with little experience, expertise, and recognition in that position in the industry.

Nonetheless, due to its very dynamic and fluid industry, findings demonstrated how there is an opportunity for upward mobility for freelance creative workers as long as they possess a high degree of capital which is valued in this field. This collective consciousness regarding this opportunity is embodied in freelance creative workers in general, especially those in class C, who embrace the 'starting from the bottom' principle. This principle was reflected in most of the workers interviewed, revealing how the workers tended to embrace their precariousness, particularly when they were positioned in the lowest position or for the lowest pay in their early careers. This precariousness was seen as their transitory phase and a stepping-stone to be able to cultivate experiences, career-enabling networks, and knowledge from the bottom, which are valued in this field. This means that a series of low-paid and scratch works which have been performed by workers are valued, which later allows them to gradually build their credibility and portfolio in the industry, putting them to get more series of hiring (*employability*) and build recognition where they can advance their career and move upward along the career trajectory to get into a better strategic position.

Owing to that, aligned with Alacovska (2019) and Simon (2022), this means that the precarious situation faced by workers is usually normalized by the workers. They hinge on shared hope and the notion that aiming for successful strategic positioning opportunities in the creative industry field, which is marked off by high employability and high bargaining power, is highlighted by the combination of accumulated competence (expertise), experience, and the recognition of workers in the industry which are built up over time. Therefore, the higher competence, experience, and recognition possessed by the workers can lead them to be trusted to gain employability where they can mobilize between projects as well as move upward to the upper class. The class, A workers were observed giving a positive and hopeful account of their experience in this industry, which they consider to be a great source of enjoyment and income in their working lives. They are found to be more able to negotiate their precariousness than the lower class since their position is prominent and easily recognized by business entities, have greater

sustainable employability, and occupy higher bargaining power positions which have been improved over their career span in the industry.

### **Navigating The Field: The Survival Strategies of The Freelance Creative Workers**

From the findings derived from digital data and in-depth interviews, the survival strategies of freelance creative workers facing their precarious situation in the commercial audiovisual industry were divided into three categories: 1) Maintaining relationships with capital holders, such as clients or production houses; 2) Maintaining relationships with co-workers or work colleagues; and 3) Adapting to the market. These three strategies were carried out to aim for their sustainable employability as their alternative form of job security amidst the work uncertainty, as well as navigating their career trajectory in this industry.

The first strategy refers to maintaining relationships with the capital holders, such as clients and production houses, and is usually carried out by the class A workers who sit in the upper class, precisely those who are in the position of primary creative personnel and managerial such as the director and producer. This considers that their prominent positioning in the upper allows them to be easily exposed and build relationships with production houses or clients as capital holders. The second strategy of the workers by maintaining relationships with co-workers or colleagues is also usually carried out by all the workers from every category, considering how co-workers also stand for providing information and entry access to work where the nature of work projects in this industry is informally secured and lies on its informal recruitment. These two strategies carried out by workers related to maintaining their relationships both with capital holders and co-workers are in line with several previous studies which have emphasized the importance of social networks to be able to work in non-standardized employment (Blair 2001; Hermes et al. 2017; Mrozowicki and Trappman 2021; Norback and Sthyre 2019; Wong and Chow 2020).

The results of this study fill the gaps in those studies by giving the full picture of the formation of workers' survival strategies by utilizing their social networks and the trust generated between the actors. Maintaining good relationships with capital holders and co-workers was manifested in several small strategies. The workers tried to always maintain the quality of work performance and be responsive

to what clients or co-workers as employers needed. They also managed to show a professional, competent, and can-do attitude in delivering projects. Workers stated the importance of these strategies to generate trust and a good reputation in this industry, both from the capital owners and the co-workers, which would enable them to gain recommendations and continuity of projects without spending too much unbillable time searching for projects. Pursuing this further, this transcends results from previous studies, which show how social networks accompanied by trust do not merely stand alone, but it is also generated based on their work performance. It also not only brings workers to get continuity of work and helps them to mobilize between projects but also allows them to accumulate their knowledge, experience, and recognition built on career-enabling networks as they move and progress in each project they are involved in. This considers how each production project has fluid team composition and diverse execution processes, which amplifies their opportunity to build contacts and learning experiences.

The third strategy was found to be highlighted their ability to adapt to the market in order to get employed easily. This strategy was manifested in several small strategies. There were workers who chose to handle multiple works or extra projects in parallel. This echoes the similar findings in Throsby and Zednik (2011) and Campbell (2020), where this strategy is seen as an alternative safeguard against the uncertainty of future projects and their income. Other strategies were also manifested in their efforts to be able to get involved in several production projects, which varied in terms of project size, genre, and position. Besides securing their jobs, this is identified as an opportunity for workers to gain experience and master various skills and knowledge since most workers tend to acquire the 'jack-of-all-trades, master of ones' principle. These findings are aligned with previous studies which have emphasized the importance of having a diverse range of knowledge and skills to adapt easily to the changing market in order to get more job hiring (Dowd and Pinheiro 2013; Lingo and Tepper 2013; Stokes 2021).

Echoing the implication of the first and second survival strategies based on the findings, this third strategy of this study showed how the involvement of freelance creative workers in various production projects is not only intended to minimize the work and income uncertainty but also aims to perpetuate them in

gaining experience, knowledge, and recognition from the network in this industry. In contrast to previous studies, which only showed the importance of diverse knowledge for creative workers to be employable yet still, left an empty room regarding its strategy to form and develop their diverse knowledge, findings revealed how the workers' diverse knowledge is gradually gained throughout their involvement in various production projects over the span of their career. Owing to that, the involvement of workers in each production project is believed to be important; thereby, some workers were found to deploy another small strategy to get employed in the market by applying their flexible and adaptable service rates. Some workers, with their rational choice, were willing to work for free or lower their service rates in exchange for aiming for greater rewards in the form of a bigger probability of getting recruited into certain projects and later would generate their experience, knowledge, and even their recognition built on the accumulated career-enabling networks.

Following the process of knowledge and experience accumulation which is expected by workers through their involvement in production projects, it is motivated by how every production project in the commercial audiovisual industry always relies on originality, uniqueness, and innovative values in the market. As a result, every execution of the production project varies, which eventually perpetuates the learning-by-doing and knowledge-sharing process for the workers (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998). This learning-by-doing process for workers occurs with the appearance of new knowledge that is formed in each production process, as has been stated by Nonaka (1991) as a knowledge-creating process.

Nonaka (1991) defined knowledge creating process as new knowledge that is created by individuals from the interaction between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge to be later amplified and selectively connected to its existing knowledge in an organization. Tacit knowledge of workers is obtained from the habituation and internalization process of workers in the industry through the practice and direct involvement of workers in production activities. Tacit knowledge of workers can be converted into explicit knowledge through articulation which occurs when workers begin to engage in the process of discussion and brainstorming with other workers in a production network. Ideas that are sourced from their own tacit knowledge of the network of the creative freelance workers are discussed and combined, then poured into a written creative brief or command for the production



project, which represents its transformation to explicit knowledge. The explicit knowledge represented by the produced brief is then carried out in its production execution process, which can be used by workers to enhance their experience and knowledge. Here, the experience and knowledge that the workers gained from each production project represent a form of explicit knowledge which has been transformed back to their tacit knowledge through the internalization process (Nonaka 1991). As a result, the knowledge-creating process, which is rooted in the involvement of workers in various boundaryless projects, then results in opportunities to gain an accumulated history of knowledge and experience derived from the infusion of new ideas or intellectual challenges which comes from the knowledge-sharing and different execution exposed in every production. This can also contribute to their development of positive recognition in the industry as experienced and high-skilled workers over their career span since it can be expressed through their portfolio or work experience.

Besides the knowledge accumulation in every production project, they can also accumulate their career-enabling networks with various teams and colleagues. This is in line with Memon (2019), which shows how having a network within a professional or work community help individuals to get ahead in their career. This condition leads them to gain greater sustainable employability in various production projects, entrusted to be able to occupy positions in the upper class and increase their bargaining power which allows them to occupy and strengthen their strategic position in the industry.

### **Valuing the Role of Social Capital and Knowledge Capital**

Findings regarding the survival strategy of freelance creative workers in the field go beyond previous studies by showing how those survival strategies are closely related to how the workers utilize, trade, and accumulate their available valued capital. The identification of capitals that are endowed and utilized by the workers was revealed through their told experience in the field and the practice they carried out to survive and navigate this commercial audiovisual industry trajectory.

The results demonstrated how the survivability of freelance creative workers in the commercial audiovisual industry against its precarious structure is manifested in their maintenance to be employable in a series of hirings sustainably.

Employability has been an important feature in non-standardized employment since it represents a new alternative for job security and allows the workers to gradually gain experience, knowledge, and recognition from networking opportunities for their strategic positioning over their career span. Pursuing this further, employability is always embedded in the structured context. Hence it is shaped by adjusting to the existing social context within the field (Bourdieu 1986; Delva et al. 2021; Ritzer 2011). The commercial audiovisual industry, which operates by establishing its precarious work system based on outsourcing and temporary projects, emerged as a result of internalizing and externalizing the tension between artistic freedom and economic efficiency logic of practice as this industry is placed in the creative economic field. This structured context is constructed by the actors in the field. At the same time, it also shapes the rules of the game and determines which capitals are recognized, valued, and legitimized for the workers to navigate in this industry as manifested in how they can be employable and later allow them to seize the opportunities for occupying strategic positions gradually.

The results showed that in order to get employed sustainably and gradually occupy strategic positions in industry, the possession of competence, which is manifested in knowledge and skills, is important. Its knowledge and skills possession is inseparable from recognition which is generated within the network of actors in this industry, given that great importance in employability is usually placed on trustworthy ties among the career-enabling network, which conveys reliable sources about talents, skills, and jobs. From the findings, the main capital which is valued and legitimized in this industry in the long run then includes knowledge capital and social capital. Knowledge capital refers to the competency aspect of workers, which includes individual know-how, knowledge, and skills in the production of audiovisual works. Meanwhile, social capital is embedded in career-enabling networks and trust, which workers with its competency are recognized in this industry and allow them to get entrusted in certain positions and take part in various sources-sharing such as work projects (Becker 1962; Bourdieu 1986; Ritzer 2011).

Acknowledging the unequal distribution of valued capital possessed among actors has been importantly noted by Bourdieu. Bourdieu has emphasized that through the understanding of hierarchical social relations between actors in the field, which later gives us an understanding of the differentiated experiences of

creative freelancers in this field (Bourdieu 1986; Ritzer 2011). The unequal distribution of social capital and knowledge capital among the workers ultimately plays a role in producing and reproducing hierarchical and occupational positions, which are manifested in class reproduction and categorization, as depicted in Figure 2. Owing to that, the workers are positioned in various relationships and hierarchies within the fields and their work organization which gives them different power. Most class-A workers tend to have a higher possibility of being strategically positioned in this industry with their high employability and bargaining power. This considers the highly competitive nature of the artistic labor market clearly rewards those who are A-listers, which represents the most talented and experienced workers, high-prestige, and recognizable among the actors in the industry based on their prominent position in production with their amount of experience and competence. This contrasts with class C workers, who tend to be in a more precarious position since they still occupy an unskilled/semi-skilled position and, therefore, have low bargaining power.

This class categorization which has been reproduced, also can be seen as the career trajectory of workers in this commercial audiovisual industry. Findings showed that aside from how workers strive for survival in employability and series of hirings during their flexible working life in this industry, their ongoing employability can lead to their career advancement, which is shown by the potential of upward mobility to a more strategic positioning that closely belongs to the position in the upper class. This is carried out by how workers are able to utilize and accumulate their knowledge capital and social capital embodied in experience, knowledge, and recognition through their career-enabling network as they move and progress throughout their career journey from the beginning until the present. Pursuing this further, knowledge capital and social capital, as the power and resources endowed in workers, are assets that have been produced by the trading of other various forms of capital. Those various forms of capital refer to what Bourdieu (1986) described as economic and cultural capital, which also stands as the fundamental capital.

Economic capital is found to be the most prominent fundamental capital, which can be traded later to knowledge capital and social capital. Findings showed

how freelance creative workers who have advanced their position into the upper class and occupied strategic positions in this industry nowadays basically started off their career from the bottom, where they were initially positioned as class C workers or entrusted enough to get positioned as class A or class B workers but working for free and low-paid due to their lack of experience, knowledge, and recognition. In line with Eikhof (2017), Hennekam and Bennett (2016), O'Connor and Bodicoat (2017), and Shade and Jacobson (2015), things such as internships, working for free, and low-paid gigs were cited as the only access to get entry and build their career in this industry which gives them opportunities to obtain exposure to cultural practices in this industry, relevant knowledge and experience for portfolio building, career-enabling networks, and the recognition to get into this industry permanently and progress along their journey. This implies that cultivating experience, knowledge, and recognition in this industry from the bottom to be able to move upward to strategic positioning later obviously requires a high cost of sacrifice which manifests their needs for economic capital in their early career. This echoes studies from Allen et al. (2013), Izzati et al. (2020), Mediarta and Adnan (2020), and Umney and Kretsos (2015), which highlighted how workers very often rely on the economic assets of their families to be able to overcome their precariousness when pursuing their career in this field.

Another fundamental capital to consider in facilitating the trading of knowledge capital and social capital is also manifested in the existence of cultural capital. The successful survival of freelance creative workers navigating their working life with their high employability and gaining strategic positioning considered some attributes which they equipped from the start to be traded later. Several workers noted how they had their latest educational background in university, even majoring in film and audiovisual production. The other ones might not have their educational background or schooling experience in film, but they managed to get some knowledge, experience, precise audiovisual production articulation, tone, and certain practices obtained through the domestication of audiovisual devices in early experience and involvement in production projects with the help of economic capital and social capital. Those culturally embedded attributes belong to cultural capitals, which Bourdieu (1986) noted as educational qualifications, behavior, attitudes, etc. These play important roles in confidently generating more of their social capital, which can be deployed as entry access to

career-enabling networks in the commercial audiovisual industry, as well as their knowledge capital which is manifested in acquired knowledge and skill.

Pursuing it further, the workers' fundamental capitals, which were deployed in the forms of economic capital and cultural capital, become important as it can be traded to the other forms of capital, the knowledge capital and social capital, which are more symbolically valued within this commercial audiovisual field in the long run. This consequently makes it easier for workers to retain and advance interest since they are able to gain entry to the industry, navigate, and recognize the rules of the game in the industry, which later places them in long-term successful survivability in this field. Pursuing these findings, the history of the socio-economic background of workers then matters to see how they have fundamental capital to take advantage of, especially for individuals' career journeys in this industry. This indicates that the successful creative freelance workers who managed to get ahead to upper-class positions in this industry tend to be dominated by the upper-middle socio-economic class workers since they are equipped with a high level of economic and cultural capital to be traded and played in the industry (Abraham 2017; Brook 2018; Wright and Mulvey 2021). However, this implies how non-standard employment and its boundaryless career arrangement in the commercial audiovisual industry can perpetuate forms of discrimination and exclusionary mechanism for those workers from the working-class ones since they might experience greater barriers to entering, navigating, and securing their strategic position in the industry due to their unprivileged situations (Eikhof and Warhust 2013; Randle, Forson, and Caveley 2015; Samdanis and Lee 2017).

Once the workers trade their capital for knowledge capital and social capital gradually, the capital is then deployed, utilized, and accumulated by them to survive and navigate their career journey in this industry in the long run. Social capital, which is embedded in social networks and trust, plays an important role in providing more entry access to job hiring and work-related information. This converges with Arthur and DeFilippi (1994), Bridgstock (2005), and Eikhof (2017), who emphasized how freelance creative workers who work in boundaryless careers, habituating themselves as self-managing subjects which obviously have to depend upon professional career-enabling networks to recurrently seek jobs and

opportunities information. Those career-enabling networks cannot be separated from the trust embedded within, thus encouraging workers to build their strategies by maintaining relationships with clients, production houses, and co-workers, as well as preserving good work performance and professionalism while executing projects. These strategies serve as ways to gain accumulated trust and networks in various parties, particularly the employers, which later can build the recognition of the workers in this industry.

From the findings, the presence of social capital embedded in trust and career-enabling networks cannot be separated from knowledge capital. This aligned with arguments from Putnam (1993) and Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) which emphasized how the trust which exists within the professional career-enabling networks is generated based on work performance, which heavily relies on the competence rooted in skill or knowledge of its workers. This appears to be addressed in the job hiring system in the commercial audiovisual industry, which usually relies on informal networks to minimize the uncertainty of qualifications or competencies of the workers. Aligned with Putnam (1993) and Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), this kind of mechanism serves as a way to maintain a nice quality of work performance, which later can deliver proper cooperation and products without incurring greater supervision transaction costs. Pursuing this further, this indicates that the role of knowledge capital with the help of social capital presence also clearly facilitates workers' access to gain a series of job hirings continuously (employability).

Every production project that the workers are continuously involved in is vital not only to generate income and work security but also enable to underpin the process of accumulating valued capital for the workers, which can be taken advantage of in the long run for their survival and strategic positioning in the industry. Aligned with Granovetter (1983), every production project is assembled of various actors or networks whose characteristic lies in fluid and weak-ties structure due to its 'distinct' production and short-term work feature. As a result, the knowledge capital of the workers, which puts the workers to get trusted to work on certain projects, can be traded into social capital, where their involvement in various work projects perpetuates them to get exposed to diverse work teams and other career-enabling networks. This indicates how workers can accumulate their social

capital, which they can get richer recognition and work access in the industry built on more career-enabling networks accompanied by trust.

While they can accumulate their social capital, it escorts the workers later to get more involved in work-related information and various work hirings continuously. Here, their involvement in every production work is also considered important for them not only to gain networks and secure jobs but also enable them to generate experience and infuse more intellectual or knowledge sources by learning-by-doing and knowledge-sharing process as they move and progress over their career span (Nonaka 1991; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Therefore, freelance creative workers are found to build their strategy to develop their knowledge capital continuously by maintaining and building their professional networks as well as adapting to the market, which can give opportunities through their work involvement. This aligned with what has been noted by Becker (1962), how learning over the work course through job involvement serves as a way of self-investing which prospectively adds to the workers' employment value and capacity enhancement manifested in their accumulated knowledge capital. This indicates how social capital can also be traded for knowledge capital which turns into accumulated knowledge capital. This continues to proceed in such a back-and-forth way where the accumulated knowledge capital surely puts the workers to gain more work opportunities which lead to more various networks, ideas or knowledge, recognition exposure, and so on.

Pursuing this further, the interaction of both social capital and knowledge capital work in conjunction to facilitate access for workers to gain employability in this industry. At the same time, this social capital and knowledge capital, accompanied by the capacity of workers to trade and accumulate them consecutively as their survival strategy, lead to the positive reputation establishment and capacity enhancement of the workers over their career span in the industry. These accumulated valued capitals, which are manifested in those reputation establishment and capacity enhancement, eventually lead them to gain more sustainable employability in industry, which later also perpetuate them to survive and occupy strategic positions in the field where they can get trusted to mobilize

upward, improve their bargaining power, and have continuous access to work opportunities in the industry.

## CONCLUSION

The result of this study indicates that the survival strategies carried out by freelance creative workers are implemented by how workers utilize, trade, and accumulate their symbolically valued capital in the commercial audiovisual industry, namely the social capital and knowledge capital, during their career journey in this industry. Social capital plays a role in providing access for workers to gain a series of hiring and job-related information embedded in social networks and trust. Social capital can be traded into knowledge capital where the career-enabling networks and trust, which facilitate the workers to gain a series of job hirings and work-related information, give them knowledge and learning experience. On the other side, knowledge capital also facilitates a series of job hirings and can be traded to social capital by giving access to more recognition and trust, considering how trust within career-enabling networks is generated through the work performance in every project which heavily relies on knowledge and skill of the workers. Interaction of both social capital and knowledge capital, which are traded to each other and accumulated consecutively as they move and progress between the projects over their career span, presented as a strategy where they can gain a positive reputation and individuals capacity enhancement, which puts them into high employability and powerful bargaining power for their survivability in industry. Reflecting this further, the non-standardized, boundless work system in the commercial audiovisual industry, which was previously shown, resulted in precariousness in freelance creative workers. However, favor and bring benefits to those privileged workers with high levels of capital within the field. While that allows them to get safety nets to survive in this field, the flexibility and boundaryless career experienced by workers turns out also perpetuate them to explore and shape their career in the pursuit of mixed creative passion and enjoyment, which gives them intrinsic satisfaction. These circumstances put them to present more positive and hopeful accounts of their working experience where they can get into strategic positioning and be able to survive and negotiate the precariousness faced in this audiovisual industry field.



### **Funding Acknowledgement**

This research is not funded by any institution.

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