

ACADEMIC FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION: VALIDITY TESTING OF THE STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION INSTRUMENT FOR MAMMINASATA STARTUPS

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ABSTRACT

Startups in the Mamminasata Corridor (Makassar, Maros, Sungguminasa, Takalar) face a 60% failure rate within three years, mainly due to the absence of a valid instrument to measure strategic transformation. Prior studies underscore the importance of content validity in scale development, yet no locally validated instrument exists for this region. This community service activity aimed to test the content validity of a strategic transformation instrument through a participatory Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with academics. Ten academics from STIE YPUP Makassar (economics, marketing, accounting, development studies, HRM, digital business, and statistics) assessed eight items using Lawshe's Content Validity Ratio (CVR) and Content Validity Index (CVI). Results showed a CVI of 0.975, well above the minimum standard of 0.80, with all items exceeding the critical CVR value of 0.62. Qualitative input from panelists led to revisions in wording, contextualization, and technical aspects, resulting in nine final items. The revised instrument was confirmed through member checking. It is concluded that the strategic transformation instrument has excellent content validity and is ready for pilot testing on startups in Mamminasata.

Keywords: content validity; focus group discussion; Mamminasata; startup; strategic transformation

ABSTRAK

Startup di Koridor Mamminasata (Makassar, Maros, Sungguminasa, Takalar) menghadapi tingkat kegagalan 60% dalam tiga tahun pertama, terutama karena belum adanya instrumen yang valid untuk mengukur transformasi strategis. Penelitian sebelumnya menekankan pentingnya validitas isi dalam pengembangan skala, namun instrumen yang teruji secara lokal belum tersedia. Kegiatan pengabdian ini bertujuan menguji validitas isi instrumen strategic transformation melalui Focus Group Discussion (FGD) partisipatif bersama akademisi. Sepuluh akademisi STIE YPUP Makassar (ekonomi, pemasaran, akuntansi, studi pembangunan, MSDM, bisnis digital, dan statistika) menilai delapan item menggunakan Content Validity Ratio (CVR) dan Content Validity Index (CVI) Lawshe. Hasil menunjukkan nilai CVI sebesar 0,975, jauh di atas standar minimum 0,80, dengan seluruh item melebihi nilai kritis CVR 0,62. Masukan kualitatif dari panelis menghasilkan revisi redaksional, kontekstual, dan teknis, sehingga diperoleh sembilan item final. Instrumen yang direvisi dikonfirmasi melalui member checking. Kesimpulannya, instrumen strategic transformation memiliki validitas isi yang sangat baik dan siap diujicobakan pada startup di Mamminasata.

Kata Kunci: validitas isi; fokus grup diskusi; mamminasata; startup; transformasi strategis;

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BACKGROUND

The Mamminasata Corridor, which includes the cities of Makassar, Maros, Gowa (Sungguminasa), and Takalar, is the region with the highest growth of digital startups in South Sulawesi. According to data, the number of digital startups in this region increased rapidly during the 2020–2024 period, with a total of 522 startups recorded by early 2026 (Dinas KUKM Provinsi Sulawesi Selatan., 2025). However, the startup failure rate in Indonesia remains very high, reaching 90% within the first five years of operation (PwC Indonesia., 2022). In Mamminasata, preliminary data show that about 60% of startups fail to survive beyond three years, mainly due to their inability to perform strategic transformation in a timely manner. This phenomenon is a serious concern because digital startups are expected to become the main drivers of the digital economy and job creators in eastern Indonesia.

Strategic transformation is defined as a fundamental change in business model, value proposition, or strategic orientation of a company in response to a disruptive environmental change (Teece, 2007). Classical research by McGrath (1999) indicates a startup's ability to pivot, one form of strategic transformation, is a key factor distinguishing surviving startups from failed ones amid market uncertainty. Within the dynamic capabilities framework, Teece (2007) explains that firms need sensing, seizing, and transforming capabilities to achieve business resilience. However, most studies on strategic transformation are still conducted in developed countries, where institutional contexts and digital infrastructure differ greatly from those in eastern Indonesia (Autio et al., 2022; Hidayat, 2026).

Although the importance of strategic transformation is widely recognized, no standardized and validated measurement instrument exists for startups in the Mamminasata region. Instruments imported from developed-country contexts are often irrelevant due to differences in market conditions, access to funding, and institutional support (Yulianto, 2026). Researchers and startup mentors in South Sulawesi have so far used qualitative approaches or instruments that have not undergone rigorous validation, making the measurement results unreliable for decision-making. This gap creates an urgent need for a content-valid instrument of strategic transformation that fits the characteristics of Mamminasata startups. Without a valid instrument, efforts to map startup resilience and formulate policy interventions by local governments risk missing their targets (Yulianto, 2025).

Content validity refers to the degree to which items in an instrument represent the domain of a construct from the perspective of experts (Lawshe, 1975). The Content Validity Ratio (CVR) method developed by Lawshe has become a standard in scale development because it provides a quantitative estimate based on the proportion of panelists who rate an item as essential. According to Polit and Beck (2006), an instrument is said to have good content validity if the Content Validity Index (CVI) reaches at least 0.80. The validation process using the CVR method involves experts from various relevant disciplines, making the results more comprehensive than individual assessments (Boateng et al., 2018). In the context of developing a strategic transformation instrument for startups, involving experts who understand both strategic management theory and the field realities of Mamminasata becomes crucial.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is an effective qualitative data collection method for gathering collective input from a group of experts in a structured discussion setting (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Compared to closed-ended questionnaires or individual interviews, FGD allows for negotiation of meaning, cross-clarification, and consensus building regarding the relevance and clarity of each instrument item. A study by Yusoff (2019) shows that combining CVR assessment with group discussion can yield very high content validity. Furthermore, FGD facilitates the

identification of editorial, contextual, and technical suggestions for improvement that cannot be obtained through quantitative assessment alone. Therefore, this community service activity chose FGD as the main method to test the content validity of the strategic transformation instrument together with academics from STIE YPUP Makassar.

This community service activity has novelty compared to similar activities in Indonesia for several reasons. First, the content validity testing of a strategic transformation instrument is explicitly conducted for startups in the Mamminasata region, which has never been done by previous researchers. Second, the involvement of multidisciplinary academics (economics, marketing, accounting, development studies, HRM, digital business, and statistics) from a single institution (STIE YPUP Makassar) enables a holistic assessment of the instrument. Third, the method integrates quantitative approaches (CVR and CVI) with qualitative approaches (thematic analysis of improvement suggestions), which is rarely found in community service reports. Fourth, the outcome of this activity is not only a validated instrument but also the capacity building of partner academics in instrument validation processes that can be replicated in future activities.

This community service activity is formulated with two main research questions. First, what is the level of content validity of the strategic transformation instrument for Mamminasata startups based on the assessment of academics from STIE YPUP Makassar? Second, what are the improvement suggestions from academics regarding the items of the strategic transformation instrument? The objectives of this activity are, first, to test the content validity of the strategic transformation instrument through an FGD with academics so that the CVR and CVI values meet the required standards. Second, to identify and accommodate improvement suggestions from academics to enhance the quality of the instrument before it is used in field data collection. By achieving these two objectives, it is expected that a valid and reliable strategic transformation instrument can soon be utilized by researchers, startup mentors, and local governments in Mamminasata.

METHODS OF ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTATION

This community service activity used an expert review design through a participatory FGD, i.e., a structured discussion forum involving experts to assess the content validity of the strategic transformation instrument. This approach was chosen because FGD can capture the process of collective meaning-making and achieve consensus through participant interaction, which cannot be obtained through individual assessment (Krueger & Casey, 2015). In the context of instrument validation, FGD allows experts to clarify, question, and agree on the relevance of each item, resulting in a more comprehensive assessment than closed-ended questionnaires (Yusoff, 2019). In addition, this activity integrates quantitative (CVR calculation) and qualitative (thematic analysis of improvement suggestions) approaches, as recommended by Boateng et al. (2018) for rigorous scale development. Thus, this method is expected to produce a content-valid and contextually appropriate strategic transformation instrument for Mamminasata startups.

The participants of this activity were 10 permanent academics of STIE YPUP Makassar recruited through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: having at least a master's degree (S2) in economics, marketing, accounting, development studies, human resource management (HRM), digital business, or statistics, and having at least two years of experience in research or business mentoring. The number of 10 panelists meets Lawshe's (1975) recommendation that the ideal number of experts for CVR estimation is between 5 and 10. The activity was held in the Meeting Room of STIE YPUP Makassar Campus, Jalan Andi Tonro No.17, Makassar, which was chosen because it has audio-visual facilities, a round table, and adequate air conditioning for an all-day discussion. The FGD implementation was divided into three main stages: preparation (drafting an 8-item instrument, creating CVR forms, scheduling coordination), the main FGD on Tuesday, May

13, 2026, from 08:00 to 16:00 WITA (registration, material presentation, independent assessment, moderated group discussion), and post-FGD (transcription, analysis, revision, member checking).

Data analysis was performed quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitatively, the assessment scores from the 10 panelists were calculated using Lawshe's CVR formula: $CVR = (n_e - N/2) / (N/2)$, where n_e is the number of panelists rating an item as "essential" (score 3 or 4) and N is the total number of panelists (Lawshe, 1975). With $N=10$, the critical CVR value at a significance level of 0.05 is 0.62 (Wilson et al., 2012). Items with CVR below 0.62 were considered to have insufficient content validity and had to be revised or deleted. All items that passed were then used to calculate the Content Validity Index (CVI) as the average proportion of essential items; the standard set was $CVI \geq 0.80$ (Polit & Beck, 2006). Qualitatively, the discussion recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify editorial, contextual, and technical suggestions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All input from the panelists was accommodated in the final instrument revision, and the final results were reconfirmed to the participants through member checking before the instrument was declared ready for pilot testing.

LOCATION AND TIME OF IMPLEMENTATION

The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was held in the Meeting Room of the STIE YPUP Makassar Campus, located at Jalan Andi Tonro No.17, Makassar, South Sulawesi. This meeting room was chosen because it has sufficient capacity to accommodate 10 participants plus the research team, is equipped with a round table that facilitates equal discussion and intensive face-to-face interaction, and provides audio-visual facilities (projector, whiteboard, and sound system) to support the presentation of the instrument materials (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The air-conditioned room with adequate lighting was also an important factor to maintain participant comfort during the day-long discussion. Moreover, the campus location in the center of Makassar offers high accessibility for the 10 STIE YPUP academics from various study programs, as they can reach it easily without significant transportation obstacles. This accessibility aligns with the recommendation of Krueger and Casey (2015) that the FGD location should be easily reachable by all participants to maximize attendance and punctuality.

The FGD was conducted on Tuesday, May 13, 2026, from 08:00 WITA to 16:00 WITA (Central Indonesia Time). Tuesday was chosen because it is not directly adjacent to weekends or national holidays, so the attendance rate of academics was expected to be optimal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The eight-hour schedule (including breaks for lunch and prayers) provided sufficient time for the entire series of activities, namely registration and opening (30 minutes), presentation of the instrument and theoretical constructs (60 minutes), independent assessment of each item using the CVR form (90 minutes), moderated group discussion (120 minutes), and summary and closing (30 minutes). Rest breaks were scheduled at 10:00, 12:00–13:00 (lunch and Zuhr prayer), and 14:30 (Asr prayer). With this generous duration, participants could perform the assessment carefully and discuss in depth without excessive time pressure (Yusoff, 2019). The entire schedule was communicated to the 10 academics well in advance, and full attendance confirmation was received from all participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Participants and FGD implementation

The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was held on Tuesday, May 13, 2026, in the Meeting Room of STIE YPUP Makassar Campus and was attended by 10 permanent academics from various study programs, namely economics (2 persons), marketing (2 persons), accounting (1 person), development studies (1 person), human resource management (1 person), digital business (2 persons), and statistics (1 person). All participants met the inclusion criteria, i.e., having at least a master's degree (S2) and at least two years of experience in research or business mentoring, so their qualifications were adequate to serve as expert panelists in content validity assessment

(Lawshe, 1975). The FGD lasted from 08:00 to 16:00 WITA, starting with registration and a 60-minute presentation of the strategic transformation instrument materials, followed by independent assessment using the CVR form (90 minutes), then a moderated group discussion (120 minutes) led by a moderator from the research team. The full attendance of all participants throughout the activity demonstrated high commitment, which, according to Krueger and Casey (2015), is an important factor for generating rich group dynamics and quality input in an FGD.



Figure 1. FGD Material Presentation

2. Results of content validity assessment

Based on the independent assessment conducted by the 10 panelists on the 8 items of the strategic transformation instrument (PD1–PD4 and DER1–DER4), relevance scores on a scale of 1–4 were obtained. The following table summarizes the responses, showing the number of panelists who gave a score of 3 or 4 (essential category) for each item.

Table 1. Responses from Participants and CVR Calculation

Item	Number of panelists with score ≥ 3 (n_e)	CVR = $(n_e - 5)/5$	Status (CVR ≥ 0.62)
PD1	10	1.00	Valid
PD2	10	1.00	Valid
PD3	9	0.80	Valid
PD4	10	1.00	Valid
DER1	10	1.00	Valid
DER2	10	1.00	Valid
DER3	10	1.00	Valid
DER4	10	1.00	Valid

Source: FGD data (2026)

The detailed CVR forms, participant responses, and item revisions are presented in the Appendix. From the table, it can be seen that all items have Content Validity Ratio (CVR) values above the critical value of 0.62 for 10 panelists at a significance level of 0.05 (Wilson et al., 2012). Item PD3 obtained a CVR of 0.80 because two participants (accounting and statistics) gave a score of 2 (needs major revision), while the other eight rated it as essential. The Content Validity Index (CVI) of the entire instrument was calculated as the average proportion of essential items, i.e., $(1.00+1.00+0.80+1.00+1.00+1.00+1.00+1.00)/8 = 0.975$. This figure far exceeds the recommended minimum standard of 0.80 (Polit & Beck, 2006), so quantitatively the strategic transformation instrument is declared to have very good content validity.

The discussion of these results confirms that all instrument items were considered relevant by the majority of expert panelists, reflecting that the constructs of pivot decision and digital economic resilience have been well operationalized in the item statements. This finding is in line with the study by Boateng et al. (2018), which states that content validity is the foundation for developing valid and reliable scales. The perfect CVR value (1.00) on seven out of eight items indicates no meaningful ambiguity in the panelists' understanding of the items across different disciplines (Yusoff, 2019). However, the CVR of 0.80 on item PD3 ("The time between identifying the need for change and executing the pivot is relatively short") indicates the need for editorial or technical revisions to improve the clarity of that item, which will be discussed further in the subsection on improvement suggestions.

3. Improvement suggestions from the academics

During the moderated group discussion session, the participants provided various inputs that were grouped into three categories: editorial suggestions, contextual suggestions, and technical suggestions. In the editorial category, several participants highlighted the need to simplify technical terms that might be less understood by startup respondents who do not have an academic background. For example, Participant 2 (marketing) suggested replacing the term contingency plan in item DER4 with "backup plan" to make it more communicative. Participant 6 (digital business) proposed changing the phrase "continuously innovate" in item DER3 to "periodically innovate" because the word "continuous" is absolute and difficult to measure. Participant 9 (marketing) also recommended replacing the example "market share" in item PD4 with "number of active users" because for early-stage startups, the number of active users is more relevant than market share. These suggestions align with the readability principle of instruments emphasized by DeVellis (2017) that items should be formulated in simple language and easily understood by the target respondents.

Contextual suggestions came from participants with backgrounds in economics and development studies. Participant 4 (development studies) suggested enriching item DER2 on digital adaptation with concrete examples such as "move to a marketplace" or "use social media", because the digital infrastructure conditions in Mamminasata are not yet evenly distributed. Participant 3 (accounting) proposed adding the example "distribution channel" to item PD1 because startup business model changes often also involve changes in how they reach customers. Meanwhile, Participant 5 (HRM) recommended splitting item PD2, which reads "The decision to change (pivot) is based on market data or customer feedback," into two separate items, because market data and customer feedback are often not documented simultaneously by startups. This suggestion reflects the importance of adapting the instrument to the operational realities of Mamminasata startups, which have limited data recording and analysis capabilities (Autio et al., 2022).

Technical suggestions were mainly delivered by Participant 7 (statistics) and Participant 1 (economics). Participant 7 emphasized that the 5-point Likert scale should be provided with descriptive labels at each point (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) to reduce response ambiguity, and to add two reverse-scored items to detect response set tendencies. Participant 1 proposed that item PD3, which measures the time between identification and execution of a pivot, be defined in concrete time categories (less than 1 month, 1–3 months, more than 3 months) rather than using the subjective word "relatively short." This proposal was supported by Participant 7, who stated that categorical data would be easier to analyze statistically. All these technical suggestions refer to the best practices in scale development recommended by Boateng et al. (2018) and DeVellis (2017), i.e., that items should be objectively measurable and administrative procedures should minimize bias.

4. Instrument Revisions and Implications

Based on all the input from the 10 panelists, the research team revised the initial instrument draft. Item PD2 was split into two separate items: PD2a (based on market data) and PD2b (based

on customer feedback). Item PD3 was revised by defining the time in three categories. Item DER4 was changed by replacing the term contingency plan with “backup plan as well as mental and financial readiness”. In addition, the examples in PD1, PD4, and DER2 were enriched according to the suggestions. Two reverse-scored items were added to the digital economic resilience construct to detect response set. After revision, the number of instrument items increased from 8 to 9 items (due to the splitting of PD2). A member checking process was carried out by sending the final draft to all participants via email on June 12–15, 2026, and confirmation was received that all suggestions had been properly accommodated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, the final strategic transformation instrument was declared ready to proceed to the pilot testing stage.

Table 2. Strategic Transformation Instrument – Revisions Version

Construct	Item Code	Statement After Revision	Revision Notes (Based on Suggestions)
Pivot Decision (Y1)	PD1	Our startup has made significant changes to the business model (e.g., value proposition, customer segments, distribution channels) in the last 2–3 years.	Added example "distribution channels" (Participant 3).
	PD2a	The decision to change (pivot) is based on market data.	Item PD2 was split into two (PD2a and PD2b) because market data and customer feedback are often not documented simultaneously (Participant 5).
	PD2b	The decision to change (pivot) is based on customer feedback.	
	PD3	The time between identifying the need for change and executing the pivot is categorized as: less than 1 month, 1–3 months, or more than 3 months.	Time definition clarified with categories (Participants 1 & 7).
	PD4	The pivot that was carried out has improved startup performance (e.g., number of active users, customer retention).	Example "market share" replaced with "number of active users" (Participant 9).
Digital Economic Resilience (Y2)	DER1	After controlling for external factors, our startup is able to maintain revenue growth even in difficult market conditions.	Added clause controlling for external factors (Participant 8).
	DER2	Our business operations can adapt digitally (e.g., moving to a marketplace, using social media, or online platforms) when shocks occur.	Enriched with concrete examples (Participant 4).
	DER3	Our startup periodically innovates in products/services despite uncertainty.	The phrase "continuously innovate" was changed to "periodically innovate" (Participant 6).
	DER4	We have a backup plan as well as mental and financial readiness to recover the business post-shock.	Added dimensions of mental and financial readiness in addition to a written plan (Participants 2 & 10).

Source: FGD data (2026)

The implications of this community service activity are very significant for the development of startup research in Mamminasata. First, the availability of an instrument that has been tested for content validity both quantitatively (CVI=0.975) and qualitatively (through panel discussion)

provides a solid foundation for researchers and startup mentors to reliably measure strategic transformation capabilities. Second, the participatory FGD process has built the capacity of STIE YPUP academics in instrument validation methods, which can be replicated in future community service activities. Third, this final instrument can be immediately pilot-tested on 30–50 startups in Mamminasata to estimate internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) and perform further item analysis before being used in a full-scale survey (DeVellis, 2017). Thus, this activity not only produces a valid instrument but also strengthens collaboration between the university and the startup ecosystem in the Mamminasata region.

CONCLUSION

Based on the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) calculation from the 10 academic panelists of STIE YPUP Makassar, all 8 initial instrument items met the critical CVR value of ≥ 0.62 at a significance level of 0.05 (Lawshe, 1975; Wilson et al., 2012). Seven items (PD1, PD2, PD4, DER1, DER2, DER3, DER4) obtained a perfect CVR of 1.00, while one item (PD3) obtained a CVR of 0.80. The Content Validity Index (CVI) of the entire instrument reached 0.975, far exceeding the recommended minimum standard of 0.80 (Polit & Beck, 2006). Thus, the strategic transformation instrument for Mamminasata startups is declared to have very good content validity and meets the requirements for use in subsequent data collection stages.

Through the moderated group discussion session in the FGD, the panelists provided various improvement suggestions distributed across three categories: editorial suggestions (simplifying technical terms and providing concrete examples), contextual suggestions (adjustment to the digital infrastructure conditions and capacity of Mamminasata startups), and technical suggestions (categorization of time, addition of reverse-scored items, and labeling of the Likert scale). All these suggestions have been accommodated in the final instrument revision, including the splitting of item PD2 into two separate items (PD2a and PD2b) and the addition of the example "move to a marketplace" to item DER2. The member checking process carried out via email confirmed that all participants approved the revision results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), so the final instrument reflects the collective consensus of the multidisciplinary experts.

The FGD activity involving 10 academics from various fields of expertise (economics, marketing, accounting, development studies, HRM, digital business, and statistics) proved effective as a method for testing content validity of an instrument. The combination of quantitative independent assessment (CVR) and qualitative group discussion allowed the identification of ambiguous items as well as the formulation of specific and applicable improvement suggestions (Boateng et al., 2018; Yusoff, 2019). The group dynamics during the FGD also produced negotiation of meaning that cannot be achieved through individual questionnaires, making the quality of input richer and more comprehensive. Therefore, this method is recommended for replication in similar community service activities in other regions of Indonesia that have unique startup ecosystem characteristics.

The availability of a strategic transformation instrument that has been tested for content validity makes a real contribution to research and startup mentoring development in the Mamminasata Corridor. This final instrument can be immediately pilot-tested on 30–50 startups to estimate internal reliability using Cronbach's alpha and to perform item analysis to identify items with low corrected item-total correlation (DeVellis, 2017). The success of this activity also builds the capacity of STIE YPUP academics in instrument validation methods, which can be used for future community service activities. Local governments and stakeholders of the Mamminasata startup ecosystem are expected to utilize this instrument to map startup resilience and formulate more targeted policy interventions.

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