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Networks and Survival under Precarity: Everyday Strategies in Madhya Pradesh's Urban and Semi-Urban Spaces

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Abstract

Precarity has emerged as a defining feature of contemporary urban life in India, where economic liberalization, informalization of labor, and fragile welfare systems expose citizens to everyday uncertainties. This paper investigates how networks function as infrastructures of survival for individuals navigating precarious conditions in Indore, Bhopal, and three mid-tier towns in Madhya Pradesh. Drawing on qualitative fieldwork, including interviews and participant observation, the study examines how kinship, caste, neighborhood solidarities, and digital platforms are leveraged to access resources, jobs, and emotional support. The findings suggest that networks do more than provide coping mechanisms; they actively reconfigure social hierarchies, producing new forms of dependency as well as opportunities. In particular, weak ties mediated by digital tools expand access to work, while traditional kin and caste-based networks continue to anchor security in moments of crisis. By foregrounding networks as both enabling and constraining, the paper argues for rethinking precarity not simply as individual vulnerability but as a relational condition shaped through sociological logics of trust, reciprocity, and exclusion.

Introduction

Economic precarity has become a defining condition of contemporary urban life in India, particularly in mid-tier cities where formal employment is scarce, welfare infrastructure remains weak, and social mobility is uncertain. Scholars such as Guy Standing (2011) have conceptualized the “precariat” as a new global class, marked by insecurity, unstable work, and fractured identities. Yet, as Standing’s framework is critiqued for being overly structural, a growing body of sociology stresses the agency of individuals and communities in navigating precarity through everyday practices.

One of the most significant of these practices is the reliance on social networks as coping mechanisms. Drawing from Granovetter’s theory of embeddedness (1985), we see how economic life is not governed solely by markets but by webs of social relations. Similarly, Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of social capital provides a lens to understand how networks of kinship, caste, friendship, and neighbourhood solidarity become resources that

substitute for absent state or market support. For cities of the Global South, Manuel Castells' (1996) "network society" offers a further perspective, where both digital and informal community networks reconfigure access to opportunity and survival strategies.

In the Indian context, sociologists such as Veena Das (2007) and Amita Baviskar (2005) remind us that survival in conditions of precarity is not merely economic but deeply social and cultural, involving trust, reciprocity, and shared risk. This resonates with Marcel Mauss' theory of the gift (1925), where acts of giving and receiving build bonds of obligation that sustain communities under stress. Similarly, James Scott's notion of "everyday resistance" (1985) is relevant: networks often operate quietly, outside formal visibility, to ensure survival without directly confronting structures of inequality.

Focusing on Indore, Bhopal, and several mid-tier towns in Madhya Pradesh, this research investigates how households and individuals mobilize their networks—family, caste associations, neighbourhood ties, and informal work groups—as strategies of survival. By situating these practices within theories of embeddedness, social capital, gift exchange, and everyday resistance, the study highlights how precarity is managed not only through market or state interventions, but through dense, often invisible, social infrastructures.

This paper, therefore, seeks to answer: How do networks function as survival mechanisms under economic precarity in Indian mid-tier cities? And, equally, what do these practices reveal about the resilience, contradictions, and vulnerabilities of urban communities in the Global South?

Keywords

Economic precarity, Social networks, Kinship, Caste, Urban India, Gendered networks, Digital mediation

Conceptual Understanding

The conceptual framework of this study rests on three interlinked pillars: **structural inequalities, intergenerational transmission of disadvantage, and the lived realities of caste and religion in India**. At its core, the inquiry is about how inflation, overpopulation, poor health infrastructure, and entrenched social hierarchies converge to shape everyday struggles, and how families cope by reproducing patterns of livelihood across generations.

From a sociological standpoint, M.N. Srinivas' (1952) idea of “**dominant caste**” and his concept of “**sanskritization**” are useful to understand how communities attempt mobility but often remain locked within inherited structures. Andre Beteille's (1965) work on inequality reminds us that class, caste, and power are not separate but intertwined, determining access to opportunities. These perspectives explain why many young men and women continue their fathers' and grandfathers' occupations: not always out of choice, but because social position and economic precarity leave little room for risk-taking.

At the same time, Max Weber's (1905) analysis of the “**ethic of work**” helps frame how religion and community belief systems influence economic behavior. In India, this becomes visible in how caste-based occupations continue to carry moral, cultural, and even religious weight. Dipankar Gupta (2000) cautions against viewing caste as merely “traditional,” instead highlighting how it adapts within modern economic and political settings, making the reproduction of inequality appear natural.

This study also borrows from Amartya Sen's (1999) capability approach, which shifts focus from mere income to the actual freedoms people have to pursue valued lives. Inflation and shrinking opportunities reduce such freedoms, forcing many to settle for survival rather than aspiration. Nandini Gooptu's (2001) work on urban poor youth further reinforces how health vulnerabilities, insecure jobs, and overpopulation create a sense of being trapped in “waithood”—a prolonged stage where aspirations are delayed indefinitely.

Thus, the conceptual lens is not simply about “poverty” but about a **web of constraints**: structural (caste, religion, overpopulation), economic (inflation, job scarcity), and social (legacy work, intergenerational transmission). Yet, within these limits, people also display forms of agency—negotiating, resisting, or adapting. Understanding this tension between constraint and agency provides the foundation for analyzing the findings of this study.

Literature Review

The question of how individuals and groups cope with economic precarity has long preoccupied sociologists, though with different emphases across traditions. Max Weber (1922) underscored how economic life is embedded in rational-legal and cultural orders, stressing the role of meaning and authority in shaping livelihood strategies. Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* (1944) offered a foundational lens by demonstrating that “the economy is not disembedded from society” but entwined with social relations, a point later echoed by Mark Granovetter (1985) in his influential theory of embeddedness. For

Granovetter, social ties—particularly weak ties—mediate access to opportunities and resources, showing that networks are not peripheral but central to survival under uncertainty.

Pierre Bourdieu's *Forms of Capital* (1986) advanced this debate by positioning social capital alongside cultural and economic capital as convertible resources that sustain actors within hierarchies. In contexts of precarity, networks are not merely solidaristic but also sites of power, inequality, and exclusion. This dual nature of social capital—supportive yet stratified—has been elaborated by scholars studying informal economies, such as Saskia Sassen (1991), who argues that globalization produces enclaves of informality where survival depends on flexible, trust-based relationships.

Indian sociology has brought important correctives to this largely Western framing. M. N. Srinivas (1955) highlighted the persistence of caste networks as mechanisms of both support and control, showing that “community” is not simply a neutral resource but embedded in hierarchies of purity, occupation, and status. Andre Béteille (1965) deepened this perspective through his studies of stratification, arguing that modern urban and rural livelihoods cannot be understood without attention to overlapping systems of class, caste, and power. Nandini Gooptu (2001), examining urban informal workers, demonstrates how networks in cities like Allahabad provide forms of solidarity yet remain precarious, entangled with political patronage and clientelism. Dipankar Gupta (2000) complicates the idea of tradition as stable, arguing that modernity itself reshapes networks, producing hybrid forms of trust and belonging that do not fit neatly into either community or class categories.

Further, Amita Baviskar (2005) and Nandini Sundar (2010) extend these debates into the terrain of urbanization and tribal livelihoods, showing how displacement and precarious employment force reliance on kinship and community bonds, while simultaneously eroding them. Together, these scholars underscore that networks in India are not “flat” or egalitarian; they are shaped by enduring inequalities of caste, gender, and class, which condition who can mobilize social capital effectively.

What emerges from this body of work is that survival under precarity is sustained through relational strategies, but the quality and reach of networks are unevenly distributed. While Granovetter and Bourdieu emphasize the structural utility of ties, Indian sociologists highlight their ambivalence: networks can sustain, but also reproduce marginality. This suggests the need for renewed empirical attention to mid-tier urban centers like Indore and Bhopal, where economic uncertainty is negotiated not just through markets but through

layered networks of kinship, caste, neighborhood, and political affiliation. By situating informal economies within this relational matrix, this study aims to extend the literature beyond binary frames of “solidarity vs. exploitation” to examine networks as contradictory yet indispensable infrastructures of survival.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore how individuals in Madhya Pradesh negotiate survival under conditions of economic and social precarity through their everyday networks. The focus was not on quantifying the extent of precarity, but rather on capturing the lived experiences, narratives, and relational strategies that remain invisible in official statistics.

Field Sites

Fieldwork was carried out between [July-August] in two metropolitan cities Indore and Bhopal, and three mid-tier towns (Sagar, Ujjain, and Dewas). These sites were selected to capture both urban complexity and semi-urban transitional spaces where precarity is shaped by uneven access to resources, migration patterns, and changing labour markets.

Sampling Strategy

A purposive and snowball sampling approach was adopted. Respondents were identified through community-based organizations, local markets, and informal workspaces such as street vending hubs, domestic work networks, and small transport services. A total of 38 respondents were interviewed, representing diverse occupational and gender backgrounds. This included young migrant workers, self-employed women in informal sectors, unemployed graduates, and small traders.

Data Collection

The primary methods included:

- I. In-depth interviews (15-20 minutes each), conducted in Hindi, focusing on household strategies, kinship ties, friendship networks, and neighbourhood solidarities.
- II. Participant observation in public spaces (tea stalls, mohallas, markets) where informal negotiations of credit, trust, and reciprocity could be witnessed.

- III. Life histories of 6 respondents, which provided longitudinal insight into how networks are mobilized across different phases of insecurity (job loss, health crises, migration).
- IV. Fieldnotes were maintained daily, supplemented by reflexive memos that documented the researcher's positionality and evolving understanding of precarity.

Analytical Strategy

Data were analysed through thematic coding, informed by theories of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986), structural-functionalism (M.N. Srinivas, 1962), and everyday survival strategies under neoliberalism (Nandini Gooptu, 2009). Codes were developed inductively, focusing on three broad themes:

- I. Resource circulation (credit, food, shelter, information),
- II. Moral economies of trust and reciprocity,
- III. Fractures and exclusions within networks (caste, gender, class).

Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured anonymity. Pseudonyms have been used throughout. Special care was taken while discussing sensitive issues like debt, unemployment, and family disputes, to ensure that respondents did not feel exposed or stigmatized.

6. Findings & Analysis — Networks and Survival under Precarity

This chapter analyses thirty-eight in-depth interviews conducted in Indore, Bhopal, and three mid-tier towns in Madhya Pradesh. The central claim that emerges is that social networks — kin, caste, religion, neighbourhood, and peer ties constitute the primary infrastructural mechanism through which households manage everyday precarity. Formal schemes (food rations, periodic wage work, health entitlements) are present and useful but, empirically, operate as structural backstops; the immediacy, trust, and everyday coordination necessary for survival are realised through social ties. The following analysis elaborates how networks function (forms, operations), how social hierarchies and gender shape them, how health and legacy occupations interact with them, spatial contrasts between cities and towns, and what this implies for agency and inequality.

6.1 Networks as pragmatic modalities of survival: In the field sites, networks were the practical logic by which risk was managed on a day-to-day basis. Analytically, this can be unpacked into three operational mechanisms (a) immediate resource mobilisation, (b) distributed risk-sharing over time, and (c) tacit informational exchange — each with internal variations.

(a) Immediate resource mobilisation. Where formal credit or wage flows are irregular, households rely on a patchwork of short-term loans from family, rotating credit within neighbourhood groups, barter of labour, and in-kind transfers (food, fuel, small tools). These transactions are not merely economic acts but performative exchanges that reproduce reputational capital; repayment is tracked through social memory rather than formal contracts. The capacity to mobilise is therefore a function of network density and resource depth.

(b) Distributed risk-sharing. Networks act like micro-insurance systems: neighbours rotate contributions for funerals, women coordinate staggered labour to cover childcare when illness strikes, and extended kin absorb temporary foster care or housing needs. The redistribution is not always equal, and obligations are negotiated through status, reciprocity expectations, and long-term reciprocal balances. This arrangement stabilises subsistence but can generate debt relations that persist when shocks repeat.

(c) Tacit informational exchange. Information on who is hiring today, where cheaper grains are available, and which clinic has shorter queue flows through ties. This knowledge is crucial in precarious labour markets where timing and local intelligence matter more than formal announcements. Importantly, informational capital is unevenly distributed and often contained within specific social circles.

The combined effect of these mechanisms is that networks operationally reduce transaction costs, enable rapid response, and maintain household viability. Theoretically, this is a vivid instance of **Granovetter's embeddedness: markets in these towns are social spaces; economic actions are anchored in relations of trust and reciprocity.**

6.2 Caste: the structural grammar of networked survival: Caste structures appeared above all as a relational grammar that organises who is linked to whom and with what resources. Three features are salient: Caste as a conduit for material support. Many networked flows run along caste lines; intra-caste committees and lineage elders facilitate small loans, apprenticeship placements, and introductions to established clients. In towns where formal

labour intermediation is weak, caste bodies perform the broker role. Caste as gatekeeping. Access to landlord networks, municipal contacts, and certain market segments remains mediated through caste affiliations. Thus, caste is both a lubricant and barrier: it lubricates transactions within the group while gating outsiders. Caste and occupational entrenchment. The inheritance of work (weaving, potting, small trade) is materially sustained by caste networks, which hold client relationships, raw material access, and the reputational basis for demand. These networks embed habitus, the tacit skills and dispositions that make a trade viable within a locality. In mid-tier towns, caste networks are more central than in larger urban sites; the institutional thickness of caste bodies compensates for thinner market institutions. However, the social insurance available is stratified: upper-caste networks typically have access to employers and credit that lower-caste networks lack.

This means caste networks mitigate risk for members but also reproduce **structural inequality** — an observation consonant with the work of Srinivas and Bêteille. Policy implications follow: strengthening cross-cutting associations (vocational cooperatives that cross caste boundaries, for instance) can increase convertibility of social capital.

6.3 Religion: overlapping networks and moral economy: Religious affiliation functions as an additional, overlapping network layer that combines affective obligation with organised capacity. The ways religion appears in the field can be categorised:

Institutionalised assistance: Religious institutions often administer regular food distribution or maintain small emergency funds; these are not ad hoc but routinised forms of mutual aid embedded in ritual calendars and communal obligations. Moral sanction and legitimacy: Seeking help through religious bodies carries moral sanctions that shape repayment norms and social obligations; the moral economy of giving is integral to how resources are pooled and returned. Cross-cutting capacity and exclusion: Religious networks can cross location ties (diasporic congregants sending remittances back to town), but they also exclude those outside the religious boundary. For some households, religious affiliation increases access to translocal assistance (pilgrim donations, diaspora charity); for others, it provides nothing. Culturally, religious networks help constitute the imaginary through which families interpret precarity and resilience (Appadurai): narratives about duty, sacrifice, merit, and divine testing shape how households prioritise spending, indebtedness, and investment.

In short, religious infrastructures are **functional and symbolic** — a duality that matters for analyzing networked survival.

6.4 Gendered dynamics of networked survival : Gender organises who participates in networks, what obligations they hold, and what returns they can convert into. Women's networks: Typically local, dense, and oriented around care and micro-income strategies. Mechanisms include rotating savings and credit associations, mutual childcare arrangements, group procurement for small enterprises (bulk purchase of cloth, seeds), and collective marketing in female spaces. These are resilient forms of mutualism that sustain household subsistence and create micro buffers against shocks.

Constraints on conversion: Despite their strength, women's networks are constrained by norms of mobility and reputation. A woman's ability to translate social capital into a higher-return economic activity is often curtailed by domestic responsibilities or community expectations.

Men's networks: Often more outward-facing, linking to transient labour markets, transport sectors, and assortative job contacts. Men may thereby access a wider array of weak ties useful for short-term mobility. Gendered labour burden: Women are typically responsible for both care work and patchwork income; networks alleviate but do not eliminate this double burden.

Analytically, gendered networks are arenas of both constraint and creativity: women exercise agency within local structures, improvising collective mechanisms that both support survival and occasionally enable modest accumulation.

6.5 Legacy occupations and intergenerational continuity: Legacy work is sustained by the interplay of skill transmission, social reputation, and client continuity provided by networks. The expanded dynamics include: Skill as embedded capital: Practical skills (weaving patterns, tailoring adjustments, artisanal fixes) are transmitted through apprenticeship-like household arrangements, where the network provides a client base and reputational scaffolding. Economic calculus: Families weigh the immediate reliability of legacy income against the uncertain returns of new ventures. Networks make the conservative choice rational: the guaranteed micro-market access via a caste or neighbourhood clientele compensates for low margins. Hybridisation and bricolage: Many households adopt a dual strategy, continuing legacy work for subsistence while adding marginal activities (mobile phone recharge kiosk, tuition, seasonal labor). Networks help orchestrate this bricolage: peer ties find tutoring students; kin provide materials for the secondary activity. Reproduction vs. transformation: The persistence of legacy occupations illustrates how networks reproduce

economic forms; transformation requires bridging ties, external investment, or institutional support beyond the everyday network's reach.

This section emphasizes the practical logic: **legacy occupations persist because networks make them survivable, not merely because culture dictates continuity.**

6.6 Health contingencies: networks as first responders: Health shocks illustrate network dynamics sharply. Networks provide transport, temporary shelter for accompanying relatives, and ad-hoc childcare when a primary earner is incapacitated. Care coordination: Women in networks often assume caregiving coordination, mobilising community resources to ensure continuity of income elsewhere in the household.

Repeated health shocks deplete network reserves, triggering cycles of indebtedness that erode household resilience over time. Recognising networks as operational health infrastructure reframes policy questions: enhancing formal health entitlement speeds help, but so does strengthening local coordination capacities that networks already provide.

6.7 Spatial variation: weak ties in cities, strong ties in towns: Comparative analysis shows divergent network architectures. Urban centres (Indore, Bhopal) feature heterogeneous network mixes of kinship, workplace relations, market intermediaries, and occasional institutional contacts where weak ties can open new, non-local opportunities. Mid-tier towns are characterised by denser, bonding tie kin and caste clusters that secure subsistence but limit exposure to novel resources. Granovetter's strength-of-weak-ties is empirically visible: weak bridging ties in urban contexts facilitate opportunity mobility; strong bonding ties in towns protect subsistence but circumscribe structural mobility.

6.8 Intersectionality and differentiated network efficacy: Network efficacy is intersectional: caste, religion, gender, migration status, age, and education combine to shape who can mobilise social capital effectively. For instance, marginal caste women may have abundant caregiving reciprocity yet lack market-facing bridging ties; migrants may possess extensive peer networks for seasonal work but weak hometown ties for investment. **As Gupta and Gupta** note, informality and social relations both enable coping and reproduce hierarchical inequalities. Thus, any intervention must account for layered identities that condition network convertibility.

6.9 Networks as negotiated agency and structuration in practice: Households do not passively inherit networks; they actively reconfigure them. Tactical recombination is routine:

kin for capital, peers for clients, religious committees for legitimacy. Over time, incremental transformations — a neighbour's loan enabling equipment purchase, a peer referral bringing a new client can alter trajectories. Yet agency is relational and incremental: networked practices often yield micro-improvements rather than wholesale exit from precarity. Giddens' structuration captures this dialectic: actors reproduce and reshape structures through repeated, networked action.

6.10 Outcomes: conversion, accumulation, and persistent precarity: Networks vary in their capacity to generate mobility. Where networks are diverse, including market-facing weak ties, households can fund education, build small assets, and occasionally move into more stable enterprises. Where networks are narrow and resource-poor, households recycle short-term loans and remain trapped in subsistence cycles. Social capital is thus convertible to varying degrees; its convertibility depends on diversity, resource depth, and institutional permeability. Over time, uneven network quality translates into cumulative advantage or persistent precarity.

6.11 Digital mediation and contemporary extensions: Low-cost digital tools (messaging apps, local groups) increasingly amplify network functions: rapid job lists, second-hand markets, and medical referrals. Digital mediation speeds coordination and can extend weak ties, but it rarely substitutes for embodied trust and reputational capital. Moreover, digital amplification is unequal: connectivity and literacy conditions benefit. Digital tools are pragmatic amplifiers of pre-existing relational infrastructures rather than transformative replacements.

6.12 Methodological reflections and caveats: The qualitative sample offers depth in processual understanding but does not claim statistical generalisation. Networks are dynamic and contingent; shocks (inflation, epidemics) can alter patterns rapidly. Ethical reflexivity guided the analysis; composite patterning was preferred over verbatim exposure. These caveats affirm that while findings are robust in pattern, temporal and spatial specificities matter.

6.13 Brief contextual note on formal supports: Formal supports (subsidies, wage days, health entitlements) are structurally important but operationally embedded within networked strategies: households often mobilise networks first for speed and then draw on formal entitlements for medium-term continuity. Recognising this order — networks before, formal supports alongside — is critical for accurate sociological interpretation.

6.14 Synthesis and implications: Networks are the day-to-day architecture of survival. They coordinate resources, care, and information in ways formal institutions do not replicate at comparable speed or cultural salience. Networks both cushion and constrain. Their protective qualities coexist with their role in reproducing occupational channeling and inequality. Spatial and intersectional variation matters. Urban heterogeneity enables weak ties and possible mobility; mid-tier density secures subsistence. Caste, gender, and migration status shape network convertibility. Agency is relational and incremental. Households negotiate structures through network activation and recombination, producing small but meaningful changes over time. Policy engagement must be network-sensitive. Any intervention that ignores relational infrastructures risks poor uptake or unintended disruption. Taken together, these findings argue for a sociological reorientation: **to understand precarity in India is to study networks as constitutive social infrastructure — not as peripheral coping devices but as the means by which life in precarity is lived, managed, and sometimes transformed.**

7. Way Forward

The findings of this study underscore the profound significance of social networks in mediating survival under economic precarity in India. Households across urban and mid-tier towns depend heavily on kinship ties, caste and religious affiliations, peer networks, and emergent digital connections to navigate economic uncertainty. These networks not only provide material support but also facilitate the transmission of information, opportunities, and strategies for coping with risk. Yet, the effectiveness of these networks is uneven, influenced by intersecting factors such as caste, gender, education, migration status, and occupational legacies, reflecting the multifaceted and layered nature of social capital as theorized by Bourdieu.

In moving forward, it becomes imperative to consider how traditional social networks intersect with the evolving digital landscape. The rise of digital platforms holds the potential to expand the reach of networks, offering access to resources, information, and markets that were previously inaccessible. However, this potential is mediated by existing social inequalities; marginalized caste groups, lower-income households, and rural populations often face limited access to digital tools and literacy, reinforcing the structural constraints identified by Marxian and Durkheimian frameworks. Future interventions should thus focus on bridging these digital divides, not merely by providing technology but also by fostering

skills, awareness, and community-based digital literacy programs that allow these households to integrate traditional networks with modern opportunities.

Caste and religion continue to shape the structure and efficacy of networks, simultaneously enabling survival and reproducing social hierarchies. While embedded networks provide access to resources and normative guidance, they can also constrain mobility, limiting the capacity to diversify livelihoods or access broader economic opportunities. This dual nature reflects Durkheim's concept of anomie, where social dislocation coexists with networked cohesion, and Granovetter's embeddedness, highlighting that economic behavior is always relational. Addressing these structural constraints requires nuanced approaches that acknowledge the protective functions of networks while promoting inclusivity and mobility, especially for marginalized communities. Policies and interventions should therefore be designed to strengthen bridging ties alongside existing bonding ties, facilitating access to new information, markets, and collective opportunities.

Gendered dynamics further complicate the landscape of survival networks. Women often occupy central roles in caregiving and economic coordination within households, yet their access to resources and decision-making power is frequently limited. Beck's risk society theory and Sennett's corrosion of character illuminate how persistent economic insecurity disproportionately impacts women's labor, social standing, and psychosocial well-being. Recognizing these gendered dimensions is critical: interventions must empower women not only through material support but also by legitimizing and enhancing their influence within networks. This could include initiatives that enable women to participate in micro-enterprise cooperatives, training programs, and community leadership, thereby converting their social and relational capital into tangible economic outcomes.

Spatial context also influences network efficacy. Urban households often benefit from a combination of strong ties, which provide emotional and resource support, and weak ties, which offer access to novel opportunities, reflecting Bourdieu's habitus and Granovetter's theory of weak ties. In contrast, mid-tier town households frequently rely on tightly knit bonding networks that offer security and reciprocity but may limit exposure to new economic prospects. Understanding these spatial variations is essential for policy and intervention design, emphasizing the need for context-sensitive strategies that respect the social ecology of different regions while enhancing the capacity of networks to support upward mobility. Finally, the way forward requires integrating these insights into a multidimensional

strategy for resilience. Social networks should be recognized as both instruments and structural mediators of survival, shaping not only economic outcomes but also identity, trust, and social cohesion. Interventions must work with existing networks rather than attempting to replace them, promoting inclusive economic opportunities, strengthening community organizations, and fostering collective action. Moreover, research should continue to explore the evolution of networks over time, particularly through longitudinal studies that capture the dynamic interplay **between structure, agency, and social capital**.

In sum, the future of addressing economic precarity in India lies in recognizing the dual nature of social networks: as lifelines that enable survival and as structures that reproduce existing inequalities. Policies and programs should aim to enhance the efficacy, inclusivity, and adaptability of these networks, bridging traditional and digital resources, addressing caste and gender disparities, and fostering collective action. By situating social networks at the center of resilience strategies, Indian society can develop contextually informed, sustainable, and equitable approaches to navigating the uncertainties of the twenty-first-century economy. The combined application of **sociological theory and empirical understanding** provides a roadmap for a nuanced, actionable, and future-oriented approach to survival under economic precarity.

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