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How Resilience Influences the Organisational Success. Theoretical Perspectives on Employee and Managerial Resilience

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Abstract: In the context of a global public health crisis, but also of an unprecedented economic, social and humanitarian crisis that created systemic tensions not only in terms of global governance, but also in the business environment, the paper analyses from a theoretical point of view how an organization can be successful in the long term in its field of activity by conducting a literature review involving recent behavioural studies. Success is analysed from the perspective of the people who make up the organization, people suitable for the activity they carry out, willing to adapt to the organizational environment and work synergistically, who contribute to increasing the resilience of the organization in which they operate.
A first objective of the research consists in investigating the valences of the term resilience. In this sense, the authors seek to identify whether resilience is a property, or a sum of characteristics, whether it can be influenced or not. The second objective is to identify a model of good practices that the resilient manager can implement in the company, regardless of the offer that the internal and external environment presents to the company over time. This article will briefly highlight the results of the theoretical analysis of the concept of resilience (at the relational level, the resilience of the employee and the manager) in the long-term operation of a company in the business environment.

Keywords: *resilience; training; performance; employee resilience; managerial resilience.*

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Introduction

All of humanity is living a present that is at historic heights in terms of the challenges it imposes. What was known to us once, is very likely to be no longer true now. The unprecedented global health, economic, social and humanitarian crisis has created systemic tensions not only in global governance but also in the business environment. The level of predictability has decreased, the economic and financial uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has increased, while the confidence of managers in the evolution of the business environment is doubtful.

The study carried out by Deloitte CE CFO Survey in 2020 (Deloitte, 2021) based on the opinions of more than 300 financial directors from six countries – Romania, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Czech Republic highlights that approx. 75% of Romanian participants are less optimistic about their company's financial prospects than before the pandemic. Regarding the perception of the high level of uncertainty, the percentage of participants who responded positively increased from 36% (pre-pandemic) to 70%. Moreover, from the same study, it is highlighted that for the third year in a row, the strongest decline was in the optimism of the participating CFOs regarding the economy's prospects for the coming year. This time it decreased by 9 pp, from 35% to 26%. The perspective on unemployment is also one of increasing the phenomenon, (68%) than the situation recorded in 2019 and 2020 (36%) represents the biggest factor of this decline (Deloitte, 2021).

Another reference framework in the field of assessing the current economic context is the KPMG CEO Outlook Pulse 2021. From a methodological point of view, the Pulse survey asks CEOs from the most influential companies in the world to present their 3-year outlook on the economic landscape and business, as well as on the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The source we refer to in this paper comes to analyse how their opinions have evolved since July/August 2020, the study involving five hundred CEOs from 11 key markets (Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Spain, UK and USA) who were surveyed between 29 January and 4 March 2021 (KPMG, 2021). It covers 11 key industry sectors - management, automotive, banking, consumer and retail, energy, infrastructure, insurance, life sciences, manufacturing, technology and telecommunications (KPMG, 2021). The KPMG CEO Outlook Pulse2021 study reveals that for 24% of the leaders interviewed, the pandemic has triggered a definitive change in the business model.

However, during this period of turbulence in the global economy, incredible resilience has been shown by large family businesses. According to a study by Ernst & Young (EY) (a global leader in insurance, tax, transaction and advisory services) and the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland (University of St. Gallen, 2021), family businesses have prioritized employee support, set new standards in addressing environmental issues and turned to new business solutions.

In this context, the paper investigates from a theoretical point of view how an organization can be successful in the long term in its field of activity, carrying out a literature review involving recent behavioural studies. Success is analysed from the perspective of the people who make up the organization, people suitable for the activity they carry out, willing to adapt to the organizational environment and work synergistically, who contribute to increasing the resilience of the organization in which they operate.

The work addresses an ever-present topic, because people, regardless of the context in which they work, the level of education or the position they occupy in society, need to know how they can be personally and professionally successful.

At the same time, organizations and companies, in order to become and remain sustainable, need healthy benchmarks and knowledge. The levels of knowledge are multiple but, if they include the understanding of the typology of the people who make up the team and how the ability to adapt in a positive manner to adverse situations can be developed and trained, the continuity of the activity and business ranks at a clearly higher level.

The importance of the subject intensifies all the more as shocks, changes, uncertainty become a normality to which individuals and companies have to adapt, developing their capacity for resilience (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011), while also understanding the fact that the period 2020-2021 represented a real exercise of "fragility" or "anti-fragility" for individuals, families, organizations and societies. The impact of enabling resilience is major, because it is this ability to absorb and transmute the "waves" caused by the shocks of the present time that makes the difference.

Organizations that understand the mechanisms of success and avoid those of failure, that have the ability to bounce back, adapt and act quickly, are the organizations of the future. Organizations that cannot create a good connection between what is controllable and what is uncontrollable will most likely leave the profile market.

From the current context, to which people and organizations are forced to submit, the essence of the research was outlined, respectively: the

identification of those premises for the development of a sustainable organization, from the perspective of human resources management.

A first objective of the analysis is to investigate the valences of the term resilience. In this sense, the authors seek to identify whether resilience is a property, or a sum of characteristics, whether it can be influenced or not. The second objective is to identify a model of good practices that the resilient manager can implement in the company, regardless of the offer that the internal and external environment presents to the company over time.

At the same time, the authors are interested in finding out what solutions scientists propose in order to overcome periods with a high degree of difficulty, such as the one humanity is currently going through.

In its dynamics, the analysis is carried out with the aim of transposing all knowledge into managerial practice, so that organizations emerge even stronger from the current economic and social conjuncture; to penetrate the meaning of changes independently of them, to find solutions and resources and to align with the new flow. This article will briefly highlight the results of the theoretical analysis of the concept of organizational resilience as a key factor in the long-term functioning of a companies in the business environment.

Resilience and its manifestation. General overview

According to the Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, resilience is defined as "the capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape after deformation caused especially by compressive stress" and/or "an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change" Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Combining the two definitions and contextualizing their semantic usefulness, we can observe how the term resilience, used in disciplines such as psychology or management, comes to represent a characteristic associated with success in extreme work conditions - stress, vulnerabilities, crises.

It is also considered a capacity that helps in controlling and modulating human existence (Leppert et al., 2005; Prince-Embury et al., 2015). It is a virtue that allows people to become better after going through hardship Greitens (2015). It is a strategy that determines how we should approach difficulties (Meyen & Schier, 2019).

Behavioural studies on resilience

This research aims to clarify what resilience entails, how it is achieved, how it can be influenced and how it affects the effectiveness of organizations. A topic of great interest for today's entrepreneurs when the

number of challenges, changes or unfavourable situations is significantly higher.

For a better understanding of the concept of resilience in interpersonal relationships, they will provide a synthesis of the specialized literature in the field, referring to studies in behavioural psychology and beyond.

Psychologist Emmy E. Werner and her team from the University of California studied a number of 698 girls and boys raised in particularly problematic conditions on the Hawaiian island of Kauai. The study followed its subjects for 32 years, recording how each participant handled failures and adversities in their lives and how successful they ultimately became. Research has isolated key factors of what made someone better adjusted, more resilient, and more successful than those who struggled (Werner, 1995; Werner & Smith, 1979). The study showed that some people, despite having very unfavourable starting conditions, manage to keep their lives in check. Thus, the challenge was to identify the factors that protect people in the face of life's hostilities, keeping them from soul problems and collapse.

What was found along the way is that people labelled as resilient and successful were described by their mothers as children as "active, affectionate, clingy and friendly". The opinion of independent observers for the same two-year-old children included terms such as "pleasant, cheerful, friendly, open and sociable" (Werner & Smith, 1979). Resilient individuals were more integrated in social play with children of the same age, willingly helped other children who needed help, and could ask for help for themselves when needed. Resilient young people, capable of mental resilience, demonstrated "a more flexible and less impulsive temperament than vulnerable, disadvantaged adolescents". Rather extroverted and sociable, happy to meet new people, they fit in well in groups. The result is a double win because "relationships make strength, and strength makes relationships" (Werner & Smith, 1979). Moreover, resilient people are open to new events, capable of enthusiasm, committed and conscientious, in crisis situations they find an honest environment for the support and advice they need to constructively solve the problem; they do not run away from problems, but actively dominate them by permanently taking responsibility in every situation; they try to solve them without waiting for someone else to come along to help them or eliminate their problem (Werner, 1989; Werner & Smith, 1979). Convinced that through their own action they can actually produce something, resilient people do not see themselves as victims and take their own fate into their own hands, maintaining their confidence even when they are in difficulty (Werner, 1989; Werner & Smith, 1979).

Another study carried out by Lösel F. and Bender D, on a number of 146 teenagers with difficult relationships, of which 80 had dropped out of school, used drugs or were violent, is the "Bielefeld Study on Invulnerability" (Lösel, et al., 1989). The study showed that unbalanced people can hardly behave constructively in the face of challenges, and when they are under great pressure or after a defeat, they overreact. Lacking emotional robustness and tolerance for frustration generated by obstacles, they lack the energy to face the vicissitudes of life (Lösel et al., 1990).

But more and more scientists have formed the belief that the roots of the development of resilience lie both in character properties and in the living environment. At the same time, a role is played by the sense of belonging, the educational climate and the early delegation of responsibility that favours the development of self-efficacy and tenacity (Wustmann, 2011). From self-efficacy thus grows self-knowledge – another important condition for resilience, along with belief in something higher that can move mountains of problems.

I HAVE, I AM, I CAN - are considered the three foundations of resilience: "I HAVE people who sympathize with me and help me (social network); I AM a nice and respectful person to myself and others. I CAN find ways to solve problems and generally cope (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). But this does not mean that strong people are not vulnerable, emphasizes Asendorpf (2011), only that they do not get stuck in fear, anger or frustration. Resilience is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, particularly through mental, emotional and behavioural flexibility and adaptation to external and internal demands.

A number of factors contribute to how people adapt to adversity, prominent among which are: ways in which individuals view and interact with the world; availability and quality of social resources; specific coping strategies. Psychological research demonstrates that the resources and skills associated with more positive coping (ie, greater resilience) can be cultivated and practiced (APA Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.).

Educating individuals to be resilient

Being resilient, Walsh (2003) adds, means much more: you learn from adversity and then try to integrate the experiences into the fabric of your life, with the strength to start all over again. But resilience, although it can be acquired, is not a lifelong characteristic, great shocks can be lost one day, even in the case of very strong personalities, resilience being a very

dynamic phenomenon that can disappear and reappear (Fingerle & Wink, 2020). However, resilience can increase if the person always lives experiences that show him that he can handle difficult tasks or dominate crises, provided he manages resources, without rushing blindly to every challenge. But also, in the context where stress is administered in moderate amounts because they steel you, make you tenacious, strengthen you (Kim-Cohen & Turkewitz, 2012).

Braden (2014), however, appreciates that the period in which we live is one of simultaneous extremes (with great changes in the world and in us) and of transition, which foreshadows the emergence of a "new normal" in which our success is dependent on: 1) the desire that we have to recognize change and 2). how we learn to adapt to change. The question he sees as the most obvious but difficult, the key to developing greater resilience, is: "How can we deal with problems if we are not honest about them?" (Braden, 2014).

We live in times when the context forces us to radically change the way we think about ourselves and our relationship with the world, because the old thinking no longer works for solving the current problems we face, and in this new context, the key to transformation is a better knowledge of ourselves because only in this way we become more "better equipped to make wise choices" and therefore more resilient (Braden, 2014).

The difficulty of our change, however, comes from our own habits, because it is much easier to cling to the familiarity of things from the past (even when they are no longer favourable to us), than to face the uncertainty that the new brings to our lives. And yet, change, in the period of upheavals we live in, has become the norm, and if we can no longer relate to it, we can feel left out, excluded from our own world. That is precisely why building resilience is no longer a luxury, but an imperative of these times.

However, wondering how resilience can be developed, the authors of the paper looked for other authors' research results. Of course, the opinions presented below do not hold the absolute truth, but they indicate a direction that organizations can take into account and that they can check in managerial practice. An answer is provided by the ten-point plan developed by the American Psychological Association to increase mental resilience, namely:

→ *Build good social relationships*. Accept support and help from people who do something for you and support others when they need it. Engage in action groups to become stronger through them.

→ *Do not consider crises as unsolvable problems*. You may not be able to change anything to avoid unpleasant things, but you can influence the way

you interpret and react to such crises. Outline your belief that in the future it will go well for you again. Try to detect what could go better the next time something unpleasant happens to you.

→ *Accept the fact that changes are a fact of life.* When the outlook is negative, some goals remain unattainable. Accept the conditions you cannot change and focus on the ones you can.

→ *Try to achieve goals.* Set some realistic goals instead of dreaming about intangible things. Propose something. Do something regularly – even if it seems small – that brings your goals one step closer.

→ *Act decisively.* Resist adverse situations as best you can. Do not bury your head in the sand and hope that the difficulties will pass as quickly as possible. Take initiative and try to overcome problems.

→ *Find yourself.* Try to find out how you can learn something about yourself. You may find that you grew up in difficult situations. Overcoming hard times, however, develops a stronger sense of closeness and more intense relationships, but also a greater sense of self-worth and a greater appreciation of life.

→ *Develop a positive perspective on yourself.* Trust your problem-solving ability and your instincts.

→ *Keep the future in sight.* Even in difficult situations, try to keep a long-term perspective and observe the position in a wider context. Try not to make the event bigger than it really is.

→ *Expect the best.* Try to gain an optimistic frame of mind. It is good for keeping hope positive. Try imagining what you want instead of meditating on what you fear.

→ *Take care of yourself.* Pay attention to your needs and feelings. Do things that entertain you and that you find relaxing. Exercise regularly. Strengthen your mind and body to handle difficult situations (American Psychological Association, n.d).

The resilience model, in order to be successful in building a flexible community, in the view of Braden (2014), includes the following guidelines:

→ identifying the reason why a community is formed: why did people choose to join? what is the common need that joint efforts can satisfy? what is the reason that holds her together?

→ identifying the common vision (how the identified needs can be achieved): what goals does the community have? are the goals specific and designed to become a way of life or for a single need? what does success mean? how do you know when you have achieved the success?

→ identifying the community plan, respectively the stages that lead to the achievement of the proposed goals, the realistic deadlines, the roles and responsibilities necessary to achieve each stage

→ identifying how the community communicates results – constantly informs the community about "what is working, what is not working, and where a rethinking of methods and processes is needed" (Braden, 2014).

At the level of developing the resilience of cities, the Rockefeller Foundation defines the concept as "capacity of a city (individuals, communities, institutions, businesses and systems) to survive, adapt and thrive no matter what kinds of chronic stresses or acute shocks they experience" (Rockefeller Foundation, 2013). The Rockefeller Foundation have identified five key principles that define resilience:

→ reserve capacity, seen as an act of responsibility

→ flexibility, respectively: the capacity for change given by our willingness to accept that initial plans made on the basis of what we knew to be true when we made them are subject to unexpected change; ability to adapt to unexpected conditions, improvise and access a "Plan B" that allows for change.

→ limited or "safe" failure that prevents the propagation of failures in systems. Redundant backup systems (backup systems to backup systems) lessen the effect that a failure would have (limited failure) and pave the way for success.

→ rapid recovery (ability to restore operation and avoid long-term disruptions). We need routines that give meaning to each day. When these are disrupted for any reason, the key to our emotional well-being is how quickly we can restore them, either to return to the old normal or to establish a new normal that meets the conditions of the new, changed world.

→ constant learning process with strong feedback loops. The key to success in the learning process is the feedback process. Only in this way do we discover what to develop for ourselves and our communities, what not to do and how the small things can be optimized to become of real help to us (Rockefeller Foundation, 2013).

Employee resilience

Resilience as an emerging field in psychology and organizational behaviour (Nguyen et al., 2016), is a positive internal resource and employees can use resilience to cope with challenges, crises and stress at work (Avey et al., 2009). Recent studies approach employee resilience as

behavioural capacity, signalled by adaptive, learning, and network leveraging behaviours, and discuss the ways in which supportive organizational contexts enable the development and implementation of these behaviours. We find proposals for resilience-building initiatives embedded in everyday practice and elucidate how leading and organizing to develop employee resilience contributes to improved well-being and performance (Kuntz et al., 2014).

When developed and managed effectively, resilience can lead to positive personal and organizational outcomes. However, it is necessary to distinguish employee resilience from psychological resilience. Employee resilience refers to employees' promoted ability and organizational support to actively respond, adapt and develop, emphasizes the role of the organization in promoting and supporting the development of resilience (Nguyen et al., 2016).

A resilient workforce can react positively and strongly in adversity, which is critical to the survival and future prosperity of the organization (Wang et al., 2014). Organizations with resilient employees can thrive, not just survive, because of employee capabilities. They are better able to bounce back and learn from adversity and uncertainty. As individuals take on more jobs and have more flexible working arrangements, such skills become increasingly important (Luthans et al, 2006). Directly related to organizational success, employee resilience can be viewed as a set of skills and competencies that can be developed through appropriate human resource intervention (Wang et al., 2014).

Human development as a focal point of social support can be used to broaden employee resilience (Bardoel et al., 2014). Organizational support behaviour can be manifested by encouraging leaders to offer supportive behaviours in turn, also focusing on leadership behaviour and participation (Luthans, 2002).

In a 2021 study that adopted structural equations, bootstrapping methods and analysed 329 employee-manager multi-point matching data as a research base from high-tech industries, service industries, and traditional manufacturing industries, Liang & Cao (2021) stated for analysis the hypothesis according to which "Employee resilience has a significant positive impact on organizational resilience". The hypothesis was tested and confirmed, the study demonstrating that employee resilience is positively associated with organizational resilience. Indirect effects of employee resilience on organizational resilience through problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping were also identified as statistically significant.

Added to this synergistic relationship, managerial resilience was found to positively moderate the relationship between employee resilience and emotion-focused coping and also moderate the indirect effect of employee resilience on organizational resilience through emotion-focused coping (Liang & Cao, 2021).

Managerial resilience

Atiase et al. (2019) approach managerial resilience as a strategic resource at the organizational level of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). By association, the concept of resilient human capital manifests itself as dominant in the contemporary discourse on the performance of SMEs. This quantitative study carried out in 2019 with 506 Ghanaian SMEs from various sectors of the economy as subjects of analysis, aimed to identify the cumulative impact of managerial training on the performance of managers in the context of relatively underdeveloped institutions and markets, based on the theory of capital human. The study showed the reason why some company managers are more likely to show managerial resilience than others, emphasizing that targeted managerial training, in practice, has the potential to strengthen managerial resilience (Atiase et al., 2019).

How can managerial training programs contribute to better managerial resilience?! The study outlines how management training programs should contain entrepreneurship awareness modules, which should provide information and reflection on entrepreneurship as a career choice. Moreover, such training programs should focus on providing business creation skills such as technical, human and managerial skills (Atiase et al., 2019; Bhatti & Kaur, 2010). Another outcome of the study under discussion shows how the effectiveness of managerial training significantly predicts the performance of SME managers, the effectiveness of managerial training in terms of cost and time being essential in providing SME managers with the necessary training (Atiase et al., 2019; Nembhard, 2014). As a final resolution, the study shows that the frequency of managerial training provided to SME managers significantly predicts their performance. There is therefore an obvious correlation between the frequency of managerial training programs and the efficiency of managerial training. SME managers must have constant training programs that update their knowledge of critical business practices and new management methods (Atiase et al., 2019). In this era of rapid technological progress and consumer sophistication, along with the fact that managers lack the necessary skills to successfully manage situations of stress, crisis or conflict, there is a need to

provide managers with ongoing training programs that can address managerial difficulties current as well as strategic business needs. (Atiase et al., 2019; Brotherton and Evans, 2010).

Conclusions

Synthesizing the ideas captured in this short literature review, as we found in the previous paragraphs, the studies highlight that there are human typologies more naturally predisposed to resilience.

Their resilience is manifested through balance, adaptability and flexibility, both in terms of the people they interact with and the new situations they experience with openness and enthusiasm.

These people are "pleasant, cheerful, friendly, open and sociable", committed and conscientious, and know how to give and ask for help. They are responsible people who neither fear problems nor wait for someone else to fix the problem. Instead, in crisis situations they know how to rely on an honest environment to overcome difficult situations. They act with the belief that their actions have a real impact and keep their confidence when they are in trouble. Of course, this category represents the ideal of any manager in relation with its employee. However, an organization is made up of a variety of human typologies, including unbalanced individuals who have a low tolerance for frustration from obstacles and who overreact under high pressure or after defeat. These are employees who, the studies conclude, do not have the energy they need to face the vicissitudes of life. In this context, we ask ourselves questions about the solutions available to managers of organizations.

Knowing that a significant role in the development of self-efficacy and self-knowledge, basic conditions in the practice of resilience, is played by the educational climate, managers can transform this knowledge into an effective tool for employee selection.

Other indicators can be identified by the persons responsible in the process of selecting new employees, informing themselves about the number, the degree of intensity and the way of overcoming the difficult situations that the potential employee faced. The analysis is relevant in the context noted by sociologists who believe that the advantage of resilient people is even more resilience. Overcoming difficult situations facilitates the integration of more knowledge and confidence in one's own strength and that of the Universe.

Another relevant knowledge in managerial practice derived from the present study is that transmitted by psychologists. They emphasize attention

to proportions and indicate that an increase in tenacity and resistance to problems is evident if they occur in moderate amounts. But it warns of the danger that arises when unpleasant life events become too numerous and too burdensome. Therefore, managers have the role of identifying the scale of pressure and stress to which employees react effectively.

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