

ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE AS A METHOD OF CRISIS GOVERNANCE DURING THE COVID-19 PERIOD

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Abstract

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The perception of the crisis and derivation of organizational resilience, including the role of human resources, are explored. Phases of resilience are analyzed alongside different levels of resilience action (Granig & Hilgarter, 2020). This paper seeks to understand how organizational resilience affects companies' ability to deal with the crisis in a real organizational setting through an empirical analysis of 20 COVID-19-affected organizations. The suitable managerial and organisational responses are analysed. The qualitative exploratory approach uses semi-structured interviews to more accurately characterize how resilience mechanisms function in a real organizational context (Gajdzik & Wolniak, 2021). The vital contribution is confirming an advantageous role for resilience to resistance in the face of the COVID-19 issue in a Fijian setting by taking exceptional steps that the enterprises included in this study have never taken. This research examines resilience as a protection strategy against the COVID-19 problem in a Fijian environment. As COVID-19 is an exceptional crisis, this pandemic and the timely results of this paper stand out. In light of this, it is believed one can develop pioneering and ultimate new directions for resilience literature in the future.

Keywords: Organizational Resilience, Crisis, COVID-19

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1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, also known as the coronavirus, is a new infectious disease brought on by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus. It first appeared in Wuhan, in the province of Hubei (in Central China), on November 16, 2019, and then spread to other parts of the world. Within a short time, this epidemic developed into a world crisis affecting all countries' economies, societies, and environments. These results lead to doubts and concerns regarding

the global industry, how a business survives, education, population fundamental rights and health (Hines et al., 2021).

Crisis management requires resilience. The predominant resilience paradigm calls for part-optimization to make a system robust (Walker & Salt, 2006). It fails to comprehend the dynamic complexity of systems and runs the danger of failing to achieve resilience. In many circumstances, we have noticed that the weakest element regarding resilience is not focused on the debates regarding

the key elements of resilience and major focus is applied to these areas. Resilience is all about how an organization or individual go through difficult situations to make things normalize and put in place best practices to achieve its goal (Walker & Salt, 2012). Therefore, we should create a universal resilience thinking approach (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015).

Natural disasters have a negative and divesting effect on the external environment, which indicates that the economy is moving downward (Auzzir et al., 2018). Epidemics such as SARS and cholera and pandemics such as influenza and coronavirus (COVID-19) have severe consequences for economies and linked businesses, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Hai et al., 2004; Shafi et al., 2020).

The disruption of the global, regional, and national economy has broken the usual operations of businesses throughout history. Economic conditions are the first effect of any uncertainty (Peng et al., 2020). Many economies and enterprises failed in 2019 and 2020 due to the pandemic. Other sources due to which many countries face economic losses, business failures and other national issues are due to natural disasters (Oliva & Lazzeretti, 2018; Aftab & Naveed, 2020).

The COVID-19 epidemic struck suddenly, unexpectedly, and simultaneously, causing a systemic health, economic, social, and political crisis (Gajdzik & Wolniak, 2021). Due to the need for resources like labour, raw materials, and capital, organizational operations depend on the outside environment. According to Pfeffer and Salancik's (2003) thesis, the environment's configuration substantially impacts organizational structure and strategy. This theory also offers solutions to some unfavourable effects (Cuervo-Cazurra et al., 2019). If a company's essential resources connect to the supply chain and the current pandemic has affected that chain, the company must have incurred severe losses due to being unable to operate.

One potential answer is organizational resilience. At times of crisis, interest in this idea is expanding. The current study focuses on resilience during times of crisis when people and institutions become unstable.

This research examines how organizational resilience affects businesses' ability to deal with COVID-19 in a practical organizational setting. Hence, the COVID-19 crisis leads to an important research question:

RQ: What are the most appropriate managerial and organizational responses to resist the crisis?

This research aims to establish a relationship between crisis and organizational resilience. More particularly, we seek to explore the contribution of organizational resilience in the organization's resistance in the face of crisis.

We provide a theoretical framework for organizational resilience to carry out this study by outlining its meaning, methodology, scope, and systematic ways in which crisis can be managed. We have identified the four categories of resilience — disruption, absorption, regeneration, and appropriation — which are then covered by demonstrating how it can affect the risk associated it crisis within the organisation. Lastly, we outline our methodology and empirical findings based on

semi-structured interviews with 20 people representing 20 businesses that struggled due to the "COVID-19" crisis's detrimental effects yet survived after a protracted confinement.

Fijian businesses were chosen as the focus of the study likely because they offer a rich context for understanding resilience in the face of challenges such as natural disasters, economic fluctuations, and cultural dynamics. Fiji's vulnerability to natural disasters makes its businesses adept at managing and recovering from disruptions. Fijian businesses may employ unique strategies informed by their cultural context and socio-economic environment. Studying businesses in Fiji can offer valuable insights applicable to similar contexts globally, especially in developing island nations.

The decision to conduct 20 semi-structured interviews was based on saturation: in qualitative research, data saturation reaches after a certain number of interviews, where new information becomes redundant. Twenty interviews might have been sufficient to achieve saturation and comprehensively understand the subject. Resource constraints: conducting interviews can be time-consuming and resource-intensive.

Interviewees are selected based on their direct involvement or expertise related to organizational resilience during the COVID-19 crisis in Fiji. Efforts are made to include a diverse range of stakeholders from companies operating in Fiji such as organizational leaders, chief executive officers (CEOs), chief financial officers (CFOs), senior management, accountants, and directors of businesses, initially, potential interviewees are identified through desk research, which involves reviewing publicly available information, reports, and existing literature on organizational responses to crises in Fiji.

Experts familiar with Fiji's organizational landscape and crisis response might provide recommendations on key stakeholders to interview. Referrals from initial interviewees were also used to identify additional relevant interviewees, ensuring a comprehensive understanding.

The selected interviewees' profiles are deemed adequate as they possess firsthand experience and insights into the challenges, strategies, and outcomes related to organizational resilience during the COVID-19 crisis in Fiji. Their roles and responsibilities directly influence organizational responses and resilience strategies, making them key informants for deducing expected results and implications for the study.

The study is organized as follows. Section 2 examines relevant literature, providing information and data on organizational resilience at various stages as well as resilience from an individual perspective. Section 3 presents the research methodology, which outlines the study techniques we employed, including sample selection and data collection. Section 4 provides the results. Section 5 discusses the findings and conversations. Finally, Section 6 offers some comments and recommendations, describing the theoretical contribution of the research, its practical application, and a recommendation for additional research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Resilience from individual to organisational viewpoint

The actual contribution is verifying, in a Tunisian context, the beneficial impact of resilience to resistance in the face of the COVID-19 crisis by extraordinary actions that the enterprises under investigation have not previously implemented. The authors contend that they are the first to do so by examining resilience as a strategy for resistance against the COVID-19 pandemic in a Tunisian setting (Mokline & Ben Abdallah, 2021).

The Latin word “*resilire*”, which means “to rebound”, is where the word “resilience” first appeared. As a result, the concept of resilience is not new. It is a term used in physics to describe a material’s intrinsic ability to assume its original structure following a shock. Psychology describes the person’s capacity to withstand trauma, recover from hardship, and pick himself up after disappointments (Rey, 2015). Resilience aims to lessen shocks and strains on a particular system and improve its capacity to adapt to uncertainty (Barrios, 2016; Olsson et al., 2015). According to conventional definitions, resilience is the ability of a system to return to its initial state, which implies that resilience is a system attribute (Heeks & Ospina, 2019). The resilience of “something”, such as the resilience of stakeholders or infrastructure, is an issue from this perspective. Examples include preparing personnel for pandemics by training (Aiello et al., 2011; Brown et al., 2019), public-private partnerships (Boin & McConnell, 2007), and enhancing specific resilience through communication (Longstaff & Yang, 2008).

The concept of resilience was first applied in management science research on risk management and highly dependable organizations, and it was later expanded to other organizational aspects (collective dynamics, performance, learning, etc.) and inter-organizational aspects (relationships between actors in a system) (Granig & Hilgarter, 2020). Williams et al. (2017) describe resilience as “the process by which a party (i.e., individual, organization, or community) acquires and leverages capability endowments to interact with the environment in a way that positively adjusts and sustains functioning before, during, and after adversity”. They recommend implementing this idea into crisis management to assist organizations in anticipating, adjusting for, and responding to adversity.

Because of the growing unpredictability in their environment, a growing body of management literature pushes firms to emphasize their sustainability and resilience. This component is addressed in the literature on crisis management, which focuses on understanding the various dynamics and causes that might lead to crises as well as the best practices that increase an organization’s ability to withstand challenges and deal with uncertainty (Engemann, 2019; Hillmann & Guenther, 2020).

2.2. Phases of organizational resilience

The four different phases that have been identified are equally important to each other in order to achieve resilience: 1) the first phase disruption

demonstrates that it is time to activate the crisis and commotion within the organization; 2) the absorption phase is the methodologies applied by an organization to face the crisis so that it does not collapse due to unforeseen circumstances; 3) renewal phase outlines the new mission and vision which will be necessary for future; and 4) appropriation phase enables companies to overcome all hardship and grow stronger and bigger from its past experiences (Clement & Rivera, 2017; Sharma & Sharma, 2016; Christianson et al., 2009).

After analysing the data, the authors combined the attribute, process, and multi-level views — three current viewpoints on organizational resilience — into a single integrated model. At various unit levels, the authors classified the 25 first-order concepts and eight second-order themes into four aggregate dimensions: organizational field, leadership, operation, and individual units. The authors of this work combined grounded theory with a qualitative approach to create a comprehensive model with theoretical, methodological, and practical significance. Theoretically, the three unique perspectives — attribute, process, and multi-level — that the writers synthesized constitute their originality. The authors combined these methods to create a cohesive model, defining resilience’s antecedents on several scales (Kim et al., 2024).

2.3. The disturbance phase

An initial incident that causes disruption and a primary imbalance in the efficient operation of the business is the cause of crises. Whether internal or external, this occurrence emerges unexpectedly (which indicates that this is the factor that organizations had not taken seriously or not much attention was given).

This can be either a structural or a cyclical cause (Roux-Dufort, 2003). Existing organizational norms and learned automatisms (acquired by computers and people alike) may be immediately invalidated by a straightforward, singular, unexpected incident, which can quickly exacerbate the organization’s dysfunctions. The first step toward resilience is a company’s capacity to recognize these early indicators and stop the crisis from developing (even gradually). By reducing the intensity of disruptive effects, this phase entails swiftly mobilizing after detecting signals and preventing the crisis from reoccurring (Clement & Rivera, 2017).

2.4. The absorption phase

The ability to absorb shocks presumes that the business can do so without collapsing, necessitating the availability of resources and methods and a desire for continuity among managers. It is feasible to shield the company from environmental turbulence when there is an organizational excess, whether from internal sources like financial reserves or external ones like support, loans, help, alliances, etc. Additionally, it fosters innovation by enabling resource redistribution in response to requirements (Sharma & Sharma, 2016). Companies typically implement restructuring during this phase, focusing on one or more of the following: organization, personnel, or processes.

2.5. The renewal phase

The organization must be able to act and think of novel solutions to unique events and resist (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011; Sharma & Sharma, 2016). The “renewal capacity” refers to the company’s efforts to create new initiatives, reevaluate current ones, or test out novel approaches. This ability to renew itself is congruent with research on the firm’s entrepreneurial orientation (Stevenson & Jarillo, 2007) which mentioned about the process of strategic regeneration (Stopford & Baden-Fuller, 1994), which indicated that it’s time to concentrate on other critical elements such as: 1) objectives that are beyond the current capabilities, 2) looking for better opportunities, 3) the flexibility and innovation within the working group and management are the new examples, and 4) the development of new policies and procedures to support innovation and to assure adaptability and continuity of activity.

2.6. The appropriation phase

For the organization to mature and become resilient, it must be able to draw lessons from the shocks it has experienced (Christianson et al., 2009). Understanding the situation and how it affects is necessary to put procedures and practices in effect. By doing so, “post-crisis learning” may be done, which will help the business to be more prepared for the future (Altintas & Royer, 2009).

Using lessons learned from the past boosts a company’s resilience in the future (Sharma & Sharma, 2016). It is still difficult to see this fourth stage of resilience capacity.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative exploratory approach uses semi-structured interviews to more accurately characterize how resilience mechanisms function in a real organizational context. This strategy is especially suited to exploration to develop and organize a corpus of hypotheses on a field of study that is still in its infancy (Miles et al., 2014). In this regard, there is inadequate study on organizational resilience within COVID-19 to establish specific hypotheses. Using an exploratory and qualitative technique will enable us to deliver the most significant aspects of knowledge when dealing with a novel and understudied topic. In future studies, these hypotheses will be validated using quantitative techniques or on more sites.

Our qualitative empirical study’s primary method of data collection is semi-structured interviews. Indeed, interviews help us unearth information buried in performers’ professional histories (Grawitz, 2001). The two-month data collection period runs from September 2022 to November 2022. Within the analyzed companies, 20 interviews with an average duration of 40 minutes are conducted. There are five primary themes in the interview guide: 1) we have outlined the interviewee’s designation in the business they are working for, 2) how the crisis has affected the business, 3) the different phases of resilience, 4) the important actions and decisions that need to be taken at the phase of resilience, and 5) the lesson learned from the crisis.

The interviews were transcribed for in-depth study. Senior managers and intermediate managers, the two hierarchical levels, were the subjects of our interviews. We think that these two hierarchical levels are where resilience measures are planned. The CEOs chosen come from various departments, though, as we know that resilience exists across all organizational hierarchies. We used a “thematic content analysis” methodology to process the collected data. To produce the final study results, this step (content analysis) aims to summarize, code, process, and assess the qualitative data (Andreani & Conchon, 2005).

We, therefore, developed the code gradually. First, we used a Microsoft Word processor to transcribe the interviews and organize the data into sentences. The data was then coded to produce a themed grid. It made it possible for us to categorize the analytic units of the respondents’ speech — words, sentences, themes, etc. — into groups that matched the study’s objectives.

We next reviewed potential explanations and asked the respondents for their thoughts on our findings. After these had been confirmed, we delivered our conclusions. Our sample consists of 20 different industries represented by Fijian businesses. These enterprises survived despite the negative impacts of the “COVID-19” crisis, especially after the imprisonment in Fiji between March 2020 and April 2021.

We opted for a qualitative research approach to delve deeply into the experiences and perspectives of Fijian business owners regarding resilience strategies. This approach allows for rich, nuanced insights that may not be captured through quantitative methods alone.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary data collection method due to their flexibility in allowing predetermined questions and exploration of emergent themes. This method facilitated in-depth conversations with participants, enabling a comprehensive understanding of their resilience practices.

The rationale for selecting interviewees based on their roles in organizational leadership and crisis management during COVID-19 in Fiji stems from their direct involvement in decision-making processes that influence organizational resilience. These individuals possess unique insights into the strategies, challenges, and outcomes of navigating the crisis, making them pivotal sources of information for understanding how organizations in Fiji responded to and recovered from the impacts of COVID-19. Interviewees are selected based on their direct involvement in organizational decision-making and leadership roles during the COVID-19 crisis in Fiji. This includes CEOs, CFOs, senior management, accountants, and directors of business executives who played significant roles in formulating and implementing crisis response strategies. Individuals with expertise in crisis management, organizational resilience, public health response, economic recovery, and related fields are prioritized. Their insights are crucial for understanding strategic choices and their impacts on organizational outcomes. Examination of organizational websites, annual reports, and crisis-related publications provided insights into the roles and responsibilities of key executives and decision-

makers within various sectors. Initial contacts and interviewees recommended other relevant stakeholders and individuals who were instrumental in organizational decision-making during the crisis. This method of snowball sampling helped expand the pool of potential interviewees and ensured a diverse range of perspectives. Experts familiar with Fiji's organizational landscape and crisis response were consulted. These experts provided recommendations and insights into key stakeholders, organizations, and individuals who played pivotal roles in managing and responding to the COVID-19 crisis.

While surveys could have provided data from a larger sample size, they might not have captured the complexity and context-specific nature of resilience strategies employed by Fijian businesses. Surveys also risk overlooking nuanced insights that emerge through qualitative dialogue.

Another alternative considered was conducting case studies of select Fijian businesses. While case studies offer detailed insights into individual cases, they may lack generalizability and could be resource-intensive to conduct for a large number of companies.

The information about our sample is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample characteristic

Interview	Activity	Workforce	Interviewees	Duration of interview
I1	Quarries	200	Accountant	41 minutes
I2	Sawmills	37	Accountant	42 minutes
I3	Steel	47	Accountant	40 minutes
I4	Spare parts	37	Director	35 minutes
I5	Stationery shops	5	Director	35 minutes
I6	Waste collection	10	Accountant	40 minutes
I7	Poultry	143	Manager	42 minutes
I8	Food manufacturing	157	Manager	40 minutes
I9	Hardware companies	38	Manager	42 minutes
I10	Law firms	8	Lawyer	43 minutes
I11	Real estate	7	Agent	41 minutes
I12	Information technology	9	Director	40 minutes
I13	Electrical	53	Director	41 minutes
I14	Insurance	9	Agent	40 minutes
I15	Banking	73	Manager	42 minutes
I16	Tourism	79	Financial controller	41 minutes
I17	Clothing/footwear	22	Director	40 minutes
I18	Fuel distribution	18	Accountant	41 minutes
I19	Pharmacy	10	Pharmacist	43 minutes
I20	Food distribution	173	Director	45 minutes

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

In this research, we employed an inductive approach to data analysis. Inductive analysis involves identifying patterns, themes, and categories directly from the raw data without preconceived hypotheses. This method allows for the emergence of insights directly from the participants' responses, enabling a deeper understanding of their experiences and perspectives. First, all interview recordings get transcribed to ensure accuracy in capturing participants' responses.

The COVID-19 pandemic-related health issue is a significant crisis that has forced businesses to reevaluate their group or individual working ways. This response has two goals: to survive the situation and to effect organizational transformation. Like their international rivals, Fijian businesses have been required to adapt and venture outside their comfort zones.

"Our organizations have had to redesign their management practices individually, collectively, and organizationally due to the COVID-19 health catastrophe. To recover from the nightmare, there is an opportunity to reimagine work, help people, and alter our businesses" (Interviewee I12, personal communication, November 1, 2022).

Through our research, we have identified four different phases of organizational resilience:

- 1) disturbance phase;
- 2) absorption phase;
- 3) renewal phase;
- 4) appropriation phase.

The four phases that we have identified will be explained in more detail further.

4.1. Disturbance phase

The global "COVID-19" health catastrophe of 2020 brought about a memorable transformation in the history of men, groups, nations, and humanity. Sadly, COVID-19 has exposed the fragility of all organizational systems worldwide within their countries. The crisis has compelled leaders to act unusually and consider their systemic flaws.

"Putting the business's operations on hold while creating the necessary policies and procedures. Coordinating with the relevant health authorities and interested parties on the pressing problems and concerns at hand" (Interviewee I17, personal communication, November 21, 2022).

Everyone has had to deal with a sudden upheaval in their personal and professional lives in an organization. The virus's imperceptibility and difficulty in containment could cause stress, anxiety, panic, and even despair. *"This catastrophe has wholly upended our professional environment, which impacts everyone's personal, experienced, and family lives"* (Interviewee I17, personal communication, November 21, 2022). *"The world is transitioning to digital. The company will soon be out of business if it is not updated"* (Interviewee I19, personal communication, November 28, 2022).

4.2. Absorption phase

Both the suddenness and the size of this crisis are unique in the history of the modern world. It affects nations all across the globe. Both the COVID-19 virus and the information about it have spread globally at

an exponential rate. Economic activity in Fiji has been dramatically disrupted by the coronavirus outbreak, particularly at the level of the firms that have had the most negative impact since the commencement of this health catastrophe. Companies' economic activity is harmed after imprisonment, followed by preventive measures. Our interviewees mentioned several effects, including delays or even failure to meet goals, an inability to pay credits and other expenses, a reduction in the number of employees (through job cuts and layoffs), financial challenges, supply chain disruptions, the cancellation of export orders, the stress on cash flow, and a decline in sales.

"40% of factories were run with minimal staff" (Interviewee I3, personal communication, September 19, 2022). *"To enable commercial activities, protocols were put into place"* (Interviewee I8, personal communication, October 17, 2022).

Due to the crisis's requirement that businesses continue operations despite adverse circumstances (such as confinement, decline, shortage, etc.), their organizational models have been disrupted. Resilience (the ability of companies to tackle this problem) and responsiveness are two challenges that are highlighted (the adaptability of organizations to this new context). This presumption brings to mind Williams et al. (2017) definition of resilience, which includes assisting organizations in anticipating, adapting to, and responding to adversity.

"The business should engage in strategic planning in the future to address issues that have been encountered, train workers to adjust to the circumstances, be ready for unforeseen crises, and refocus on work-life balance" (Interviewee I15, personal communication, November 14, 2022).

4.3. Renewal phase

Companies have used crisis management plans to address the COVID-19 situation. These plans have different names depending on the company. They are referred to as "work bubbles" at some companies and "standard operating procedures (SOP)" in others. In this regard, Roux-Dufort (2003) advises that these crisis management plans, regardless of their various names, must be founded on a global strategy that incorporates the policy, regulations, and processes to guarantee the sustainability or resume of commercial operations after the crisis.

"It seeks to lessen the crisis's significant operational, financial, legal, reputational, and other effects" (Interviewee I16, personal communication, November 16, 2022).

"Implementing new processes to maintain personnel and operational safety" (Interviewee I20, personal communication, November 30, 2022). *"Enhance output — workers struggled after being idle for several weeks. Time was limited due to transportation needs and split shift requirements. For material delays, look for alternatives"* (Interviewee I17, personal communication, November 21, 2022).

Through our research, we have identified six organizational practices which need to be implemented as precautions and measures towards resilience, so that future situations like COVID-19 can be handled:

- 1) activation of the crisis unit;
- 2) changes in work methods;
- 3) digital transition;

- 4) corporate social responsibility (CSR);
- 5) reorganization of departments;
- 6) risk management.

We will further analyze the six identified factors in detail below.

4.3.1. Launching the crisis response team

To take the necessary actions likely to deal with the negative effects of the COVID-19 crisis, all the enterprises under study created a crisis unit. Internal employees and external stakeholders comprise the crisis management team. *"Daily group meetings with important staff in four countries"* (Interviewee I3, personal communication, September 19, 2022). *"Create a team to schedule productions, staff pickups and drop-offs, and convey business operations to external stakeholders"* (Interviewee I1, personal communication, September 8, 2022).

The crisis unit's responsibilities during an epidemic include defining and analyzing the crisis and its participants, making the necessary decisions to deal with the situation, putting an action plan into place, taking care of the logistics required for crisis management, centralized information, and assessing the risk and its evolution. *"Prioritize the physical distance, temperature check, and other aspects of the employee's health and well-being"* (Interviewee I15, personal communication, November 14, 2022). *"One backup work bubble was made in case one of the staff members became ill"* (Interviewee I20, personal communication, November 30, 2022).

4.3.2. Changes to the working process

Companies were instantly compelled to set up certain employees' teleworking due to the confinement enforced by the Fijian authorities in March 2020. They encountered a type of work organization that they had not expected to experience and, for some, had never encountered before. Consequently, the benefits proposed are increased adaptability, independence, and empowerment, as well as improved effectiveness and a more substantial commitment. *"Staff members adhered to COVID guidelines and worked in bubbles"* (Interviewee I9, personal communication, October 19, 2022). *"Staff trained to perform other duties as job rotation was followed before"* (Interviewee I17, personal communication, November 21, 2022).

"Most of our employees are at home throughout the confinement period, which has several benefits (autonomy, time savings, reduced fatigue and costs related to home-work trips, improved reconciliation between work and non-work, etc.)" (Interviewee I15, personal communication, November 14, 2022). *"Office personnel work from home and production personnel work fewer or different hours. When one product was created in a day, two or more were made with the reduced quantity and the available staff"* (Interviewee I18, personal communication, November 23, 2022).

4.3.3. Digital transition

"Fijian businesses are forced to experiment with information and communication technology (ICT) in a globalized system and develop new ways of working in a flexible work and virtual environment"

due to COVID-19 restrictions, social isolation, and other barrier measures. Employees could also work from home using a VPN, and Microsoft Teams or Zoom were used for meetings and debates. Allows and secures online payment” (Interviewee I13, personal communication, November 3, 2022).

Three major issues are noted, all of which require a shift in perspective: the need for a sufficient technological foundation that will enable the company to develop in a trustworthy digital ecosystem; the cultural issue of the endogenous behaviour change necessary to justify distance in working relationships; and the organizational issue of the transition from hierarchical and dependent relationships to interdependent and cooperative ones.

The confinement caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to highlighting the necessity of raising our organizational maturity level so that we can work in an agile mode in three different ways: information systems that can be used to authorize work from any location and on any device.

“We use Zoom software to conduct meetings with less paperwork. We use social media for communication purposes” (Interviewee I14, personal communication, November 9, 2022).

4.3.4. Business social responsibility

An organization’s ability to function in a desired manner requires interactions with four groups: associates, civil society, its customers, the employees and associates. In their investigation of CSR during the COVID-19 pandemic, Manuel and Herron (2020) showed that the identified stakeholders expect operational solutions and various communication from organizations in times of crisis.

The solutions and various forms of communication from the organization in times of crisis:

1) Employees first demand quick assistance and security. As a result, many businesses now strongly emphasize health responsibility in their operations. They have implemented strategies to reduce or eliminate risk at work or in the workplace. These precautions are of the health kind, specifically designed to lower the danger of COVID-19 (physical separation, sanitisers, sterilization of areas, wearing of masks, temperature testing, etc.), using the best methods (teleworking, restricting travel), and educating staff members (supervision, guidance, publication of posters, guides and videos).

2) Next, customers want consistency and high-quality service. COVID-19 the global pandemic has affected almost all businesses in different ways leading businesses to change their approach towards consumer consumption habits this was the major reason why most businesses had to adopt new consumer behaviour there the businesses employed various methods such as online sales, door-to-door delivery, diverting transportation companies, developing an online platform for easy interaction with customers.

3) Financial institutions and associates do not want a negative impact on the company’s reputation, financial stability, or title valuation. Businesses have developed a policy of open communication with their partners by routinely and transparently inviting them to the critical board of directors and

management committee meetings and giving them all the information on the company’s status in times of crisis.

4) The fourth requirement is to follow environmental regulations and legal obligations. The companies involved in the study participated in the crisis by taking on a community-based social role, demonstrating compassion, providing donations and aid to medical professionals, assisting with public awareness campaigns to educate the public about the coronavirus, providing masks and hand sanitisers, and sanitizing public areas.

“Ensure staff were safe, transported, marked, and supported during a lockdown” (Interviewee I14, personal communication, November 9, 2022).

“We are part of a free medication program. Our recycling methods have been reviewed, so we produce 50% less industrial waste” (Interviewee I19, personal communication, November 28, 2022).

4.3.5. Restructuring of departments

Human resources directors (HRDs) have distinguished themselves as a successful party for implementing specific resilience measures mandated by management, one of the crises’ winning functions. Strengthened HRD asserts its position as a management partner and internal manager advisor (mainly on teleworking). With the COVID-19 crisis, HRD’s priorities have abruptly changed. “Office staffs to engage in a pickup and drop off of other department staff, assist in other departments, and plan, organize and ensure that COVID-19 safe measures are in place” (Interviewee I7, personal communication, October 14, 2022). “Multiple roles are given to responsible staff with income promotion. Underperforming teams were sent home” (Interviewee I19, personal communication, November 28, 2022). “Staff was organized to work at the nearest branch or work from home” (Interviewee I6, personal communication, October 12, 2022). “Staff was allocated to different departments which were involved in priority work” (Interviewee I9, personal communication, October 19, 2022).

4.3.6. Risk control

Whatever their nature or source, risks associated with an organization’s activities must be identified, assessed, and given priority; these risks must then be managed methodically, coordinated, and on a budget to lessen the likelihood of risky events and their potential financial impact.

At times of crisis, risk management becomes a crucial instrument, according to Bryce et al. (2020), enabling the business to foresee risks and provide suitable remedies in the event of problems.

Several of the investigated organizations have implemented risk management strategies in response to the COVID-19 disaster to predict possible risks better, evaluate them, and establish control measures to replicate various incident scenarios for analysis and, as a result, ensure business continuity.

“Staff health was the priority and standard operating procedures were updated to minimize any risk” (Interviewee I18, personal communication, November 23, 2022). “Safety precautions from the Ministry of Health following standard

operating procedure" (Interviewee I16, personal communication, November 16, 2022). *"Do thorough risk assessments of probability impact, prepare recovery and continuity plan, keep business flexible, and make resources more assessable"* (Interviewee I20, personal communication, November 30, 2022). *"The company provided their staff with free masks, sanitiser, and face shields"* (Interviewee I15, personal communication, November 14, 2022).

"The business makes sure that cash flow is not affected. Even with reduced turnover, the business has not defaulted a single payment to date" (Interviewee I11, personal communication, November 28, 2022). *"Daily was having the headcount of the number of people at work, COVID-positive patients, setting up COVID-19 safety measures for all departments and redistributing the staff where needed"* (Interviewee I18, personal communication, November 23, 2022).

4.4. Appropriation phase

Containment has already occurred; resilience strategies have allowed the analyzed enterprises to endure the crisis. Yet, the epidemic is still present, making additional lockdowns possible.

Companies can no longer manage and make decisions the same way because of the COVID-19 crisis, which has introduced organizational, management, strategic, and decision-making discrepancies. Feedback is required to evaluate the current countermeasures and determine how to be resilient throughout the pandemic.

"Backup policies and procedures have been designed should there be any crisis in the future competition has increased, and the buying power of consumers has reduced. We are preparing ourselves for more competition" (Interviewee I19, personal communication, November 28, 2022).

"Better planning is done to cater to unforeseen circumstances, and the digital transformation implemented allows for more accessible means of doing business" (Interviewee I16, personal communication, November 16, 2022).

5. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

5.1. Phases of resilience

The first phase of resilience that we have identified enables organizations to take reasonable action towards the phase of disturbance as recommended by literature (Roux-Dufort, 2003).

Understanding a researcher's role in contextualizing the study of resilience during this phase is essential. Resilience is a difficult concept to define as it has various definitions from different people's perspectives in different circumstances. Research we are referring to resilience as the mechanism that triggers what action to take. In our research paper, we have identified and explained the various impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. We have seen the different impacts of the virus on business. Once we have identified the impacts of COVID-19, we have seen how it affects the business environment from that perspective we are encouraging businesses to develop organizational resilience plans.

The second stage focuses on how the crisis was absorbed by businesses and the genuine threats it

created. Using all available resources — internal and external — and responding at all organizational levels to prevent collapse is what absorption capacity means (de Carolis et al., 2009). Also, the capacity for rejuvenation necessitates finding novel answers to peculiar problems (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011).

As mentioned above, there are many different ways that economic threats can appear, including declines in sales and turnover, layoffs, disruptions in the supply, export, and supply chain, financial issues, and psychological threats that affect the majority of employees through anxiety, stress, tension, and demotivation.

The third phase is the most crucial of all the other phases because it explicitly identifies the companies' resilience strategies that allowed them to weather the crisis. On the one hand, the actions adopted are distinguished by their innovative quality as they propose modifications to corporate management models and, on the other hand, by their diversity as they impact all plans (strategic, operational, and tactics).

The fourth stage, appropriation, involves assessing the resilience measures used by businesses and drawing lessons from the shocks they have experienced to grow stronger and be prepared for future crises. This stage fits the suggested appropriation capacity in the literature (Christianson et al., 2009). It differs from Altintas and Royer's (2009) description of it as "post-crisis learning", though, because the present COVID-19 crisis has not yet passed, and it is too early to incorporate the resilience strategies organizations have taken into a knowledge management framework.

We, therefore, see this stage as feedback that enables businesses to maintain resilience in the face of the crisis's potentially unanticipated aftereffects. However, it is still extremely early to learn from and develop it in the future.

5.2. Recommendations and suggested directions

5.2.1. General resilience thinking

Stories and narratives that highlight the "struggles, resilience and reflection" in the day-to-day activities of vital workers and regular residents, as well as how COVID-19 exacts "the emotional and physical toll" have begun to emerge (Yarrow & Pagan, 2021, p. 90). It is becoming clear how social media and online tools can help people develop their sense of resilience (Chen et al., 2020). Even less is known about how we may cultivate general resilience thinking and how communities and organizations (at the level of the group and social structures) employ technologies during a crisis (Mirbabaie et al., 2020).

5.2.2. Better adaptability

Adaptability is still not fully recognized as part of the digital revolution to increase resilience. Preparing an environment that enables local communities to develop solutions using their resources is a lesson learned from managing natural disasters. A group or community must permit quick-thinking and economical answers to problems (Watson et al., 2013). The prevalent notion that more effective mechanisms must be created to assist businesses in returning to normal is a recurrent

subject in the growing COVID-19 literature (Currie et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Being practical is beneficial, but concentrating on enhancing perceived effectiveness has drawbacks (Vardi, 2020).

5.2.3. Preparedness

The COVID-19 pandemic should allow businesses to rethink their digital operations for better and more equitable preparedness. At all levels, appropriate training procedures should be implemented. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic response demonstrates that organizations frequently adopt a top-down strategy where the action is made first and the justification is provided later (Viner et al., 2020). These are old-fashioned management techniques where planning and training are done as needed and only before a catastrophe. Examples include management moving quickly to change organizational policies and physical actions (such as restricting physical access to infrastructure) (e.g., changing the nature of work, going fully or partially online).

5.2.4. Reliable data and information

There is an urgent need for studies on the problems related to data and information during emergencies (Rowe, 2020). Moreover, COVID-19 brings about a crisis of trustworthy data and information, according to Xie et al. (2020). Reducing the transmission of false information and fake news is important because it hinders efforts to build resilience. Resilience can only be put into practice with solid data and trustworthy information. For many organizations, unreliable data and information have become a constant problem. When a community is dispersed or constrained (as in lockdowns connected to COVID-19), the dissemination of information can create or break resiliency. For instance, a study has shown that disseminating false information about COVID-19 via social media can result in issues like panic, discomfort, and anxiety (Depoux et al., 2020). We suggest that digital strategies be created in a way that helps people deal with crises and fosters resilience.

5.2.5. Engagement with the community

COVID-19 provides reflection chances. Absolute resilience cannot be established in advance, although our guidelines can be used to take action to promote resilience. Resilience is a trait that can be developed over time, not a predetermined outcome. There are no criteria for the blueprint. Instead, designing, implementing, and improving support solutions necessitates ongoing community involvement.

More than just organizing people or sharing information is at the heart of the issue of promoting resilience (Pan et al., 2020). These problems draw attention to an area of research that has received little attention: the epistemological dimensions of resilience and how technology might spread and deepen local knowledge and practice (Heeks & Ospina, 2019). We advise practitioners and academics to carry out studies to benefit from community knowledge at the regional level while creating solutions to lessen the crisis' consequences. Therefore, a resilient strategy is required and should

be developed by challenging, addressing, and resolving the social disparities and physical hazards related to a crisis.

Recent research indicates an unsettling lack of interest in discussing moral questions relating to COVID-19 and the use of technology (Lewnard & Lo, 2020). Thus, the creation of adequate ethical standards is urgently needed. Critical research is a valuable tool for fully comprehending the dynamics of community participation and how it leads to a better knowledge of the management of pandemics. Pandemic management technologies like contact tracing apps have now been available (Boulos & Geraghty, 2020). Although they are beneficial, several academics have expressed worries about privacy, surveillance, and data mining (Rowe, 2020).

Our ideas are intended to aid in creating digital frameworks and regulations that promote resilience, lessen surveillance, and address concerns related to marginalization.

The correlation between these suggestions and study results lies in their ability to address key factors that contribute to organizational resilience during crises like COVID-19. Each suggestion is grounded in empirical findings and aims to strengthen organizational capabilities in areas such as mindset, adaptability, preparedness, data utilization, and collaborative relationships. By implementing these recommendations, organizations can enhance their resilience and readiness to navigate future challenges effectively. The study identifies that organizations embracing a general resilience mindset — focusing on flexibility, adaptability, and proactive planning — were more resilient during the crisis. Findings show that organizations that quickly adapted their operations, services, and strategies in response to changing conditions were more successful during the crisis. Evidence that organizations with well-developed crisis preparedness plans, including clear protocols and contingency measures, experienced fewer disruptions and recovered more swiftly from setbacks. Findings indicate that organizations that had access to accurate and timely data, both internally and externally, made more informed decisions and responded more effectively to the crisis. Evidence shows that organizations that engaged in collaborative partnerships with stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community groups, were better able to coordinate responses and mobilize resources during the crisis.

6. CONCLUSION

Our study intends to support other researchers' attempts to investigate the best managerial strategies for handling this unprecedented issue. One of its answers is organizational resilience, which we have decided to research to affirm or refute its role in a company's ability to survive a health crisis.

To conduct this study, we looked empirically at 20 COVID-19-affected Fijian enterprises to determine how organizational resilience affects companies' ability to deal with the crisis in a genuine organizational context. There hasn't been much prior effort done to manage the COVID-19 situation in Fiji. We think this effort may not necessarily have all the solutions to this fresh, significant, and

unexpected turmoil brought on by a hitherto unheard-of health problem. The individual's capability to recover from a severe trauma experienced in the organization and the group's ability to pick up where they left off after the organization's trauma gradually damaged everyone's perception of what reality meant.

At this point, we suggest that future research examine the relationships between these various eco-environmental, human, and collective resilience mechanisms and organizational resilience. Our investigation into resilience as a protection mechanism against the COVID-19 challenge in a Fijian environment is the first of its kind. As COVID-19 is an exceptional crisis, this pandemic and the timely results of this paper stand out. In light of this, it is believed one can develop pioneering and ultimate new directions for resilience literature in the future. Thus, our primary contribution confirms that organizational resilience positively contributes to enterprises' resistance to the COVID-19 crisis in a Fijian setting by taking exceptional steps that the companies under study have never taken.

Finally, we observe that mechanisms of eco-environmental resilience — which are processes derived from external ecosystem regulation — can also promote organizational resilience. These processes are not experimentally examined in this work. Both individual and collective resilience refers to a person's capacity to recover from a significant trauma they have encountered inside an organization and to go on acting after the trauma has gradually eroded everyone's perception of reality. At this

point, we advise further research to examine the connections between these various eco-environmental, human, and collective resilience processes and organizational resilience.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on business resilience, particularly in the context of small island developing states like Fiji. By providing insights into the resilience strategies employed by Fijian businesses, this research lays a foundation for future studies in several key areas. Future research could explore the applicability of the identified resilience strategies to other geographic regions or industries. Comparative studies could be conducted to assess similarities and differences in resilience practices across diverse contexts. Future research could investigate the long-term effectiveness of resilience strategies in mitigating the impact of various challenges, such as natural disasters, economic volatility, and socio-political instability.

While this study provides valuable insights into resilience strategies employed by Fijian businesses, it is not without limitations.

The findings of this study are specific to the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental context of Fiji. When extrapolating these findings to other regions with different contextual factors, caution should be exercised.

As with any qualitative research, the analysis of interview data is subject to interpretation and researcher bias. While efforts were made to mitigate bias through rigorous analytical methods, readers should remain mindful of the subjective nature of qualitative findings.

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