

# AGILITY FOR RESILIENCE: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF COMPANIES' STRATEGIES IN A VOLATILE, UNCERTAIN, COMPLEX, AND AMBIGUOUS ENVIRONMENT

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## Abstract

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Globalization, digital transformation, talent mobility, and various crises have radically reshaped the competitive landscape, leading to a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment. Organizational agility has emerged as a critical response to these profound changes, offering companies the ability to adapt quickly while improving their strategic resilience. This study aims to investigate how Moroccan organizations build resilience by adopting agile strategies to cope with VUCA forces. Using a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key leaders across various industries. Thematic analysis was applied to the data to identify common trends in agile practices. The findings show that agility enables companies to respond rapidly to market volatility and uncertainty, ensuring not only their survival, but also their ability to thrive in highly dynamic environments. This research contributes to the existing literature by offering empirical insights into the role of organizational agility in fostering resilience in emerging markets. Additionally, the results highlight the importance of agility as a strategic tool that helps companies navigate the complexities of the VUCA environment.

**Keywords:** Organizational Agility, VUCA, Resilience, Organizational Change

**Authors' individual contribution:** Conceptualization — C.H.; Methodology — M.A.; Formal Analysis — C.H.; Writing — Original Draft — C.H.; Writing — Review & Editing — M.A.; Supervision — M.A.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have brought about a major revolution in our society and its economic model, thanks to the digital revolution. The concepts of complexity, interdependence, uncertainty and individuality will be decisive for future organizations. To keep pace

with their customers and their environment, companies will have to constantly reinvent themselves and adapt rapidly (Barrand, 2009).

The evolution of future organizations will be influenced by this transformation, which is reinforced by new interactions with space and time, as well as increased uncertainty and complexity (Barrand, 2009). According to a 2021 study by

McKinsey, 85% of chief executive officers (CEOs) expect increased volatility in the business environment due to global economic shifts and technological disruption (Callaghan et al., 2021). Our societies are also being disrupted by a succession of economic, social and ecological crises (Cassiers et al., 2017; Guichard, 2018). The business world synthesizes this turbulence through the acronym VUCA — volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (Malaval, 2018).

In an environment where fixed reference points and pre-drawn lines are becoming less reliable, companies need to evolve. This means losing the traditional adherence principle (Durand, 2021). It is essential for tomorrow's company to be ready to constantly modify its strategy in the face of opportunities and threats, while developing a capacity for anticipation. This anticipation must be demonstrated both at the strategic level, through major policy decisions, and at the operational level, through the day-to-day actions of each employee, who must now reason "with complications in mind" (Barrand, 2009).

To ensure this radical transformation and meet the demands of this constantly changing environment, companies need to adopt new organizational structures and innovative practices.

The COVID-19 crisis demonstrated the unpredictability and difficulty (Almayali & Almusawy, 2021) of managing a VUCA environment (Bartscht, 2015). However, it also revealed that agile and innovative companies can discover new opportunities even in times of crisis (Maltais, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital technologies by several years, with organizations that adapted quickly reporting 25% higher resilience in business operations (Deloitte, 2022). The need to anticipate and adapt manifests itself in new forms of organization. Pyramids will be lower and lower, encouraging creativity. Hierarchical levels will be removed to allow more people to deal with parts of the system and formulate ideas (Barrand, 2009). According to Breu et al. (2002), the emphasis is on new collective and behavioral practices, based on principles of sharing, hybridization, anticipation, autonomy and meaning — in a word, agility.

In this way, agility becomes indispensable for the company: it must constantly innovate to respond in a unique and renewed way to the needs of its members (Mrani Zentar et al., 2020). Today's businesses face major challenges, which are both opportunities and risks. According to Zenjari and Bouayad (2021), to meet these challenges and benefit from them while reducing losses, it is essential that they adopt organizational agility strategies to cope with a world characterized by VUCA. In Morocco, recent economic data from the High Commission for Planning (HCP, 2021) indicates that 70% of businesses report being significantly impacted by global market fluctuations, underscoring the need for greater organizational agility.

Alongside agility, another crucial concept for modern organizations is resilience. Organizational resilience is based on agility, which is defined as an organization's ability to adapt quickly and effectively to change (Sabben, 2021). By integrating agility principles into their operations, organizations strengthen their ability to respond proactively to disruptions and adjust quickly to new conditions (Sabben, 2021). It is by studying these dynamics that

we approach organizational resilience (Bégin & Chabaud, 2010). According to Therrien (2010), resilience can also be seen as the ability of organizations to remain flexible in managing their resources in order to cope with unexpected situations, as well as a learning capacity that enables them to learn from unexpected experiences (Maltais, 2022). By analyzing the agility of organizations, it is possible to draw up a portrait of their organizational resilience (Maltais, 2022).

Despite the extensive body of research on organizational agility, there remains a significant gap in understanding how companies in emerging markets, particularly in Morocco, develop resilience in response to VUCA environments. Most studies have focused on multinational corporations in developed economies, leaving the unique challenges faced by Moroccan companies underexplored. This study aims to fill that gap by examining how Moroccan firms implement agile strategies to adapt and thrive amid market uncertainty.

The primary research question guiding this study is:

*RQ: How do Moroccan organizations develop agility to enhance their resilience in a rapidly changing environment?*

Grounded in Teece et al.'s (1997) dynamic capabilities framework, which asserts that organizations must continuously adapt their resources and capabilities to survive in changing environments, the study examines how agility enables companies to effectively respond to VUCA forces. Understanding these dynamics is crucial, not only for advancing theoretical knowledge but also for supporting practical strategies for businesses operating in emerging markets. To explore this, the study utilizes a qualitative research approach, employing semi-structured interviews with executives in Moroccan companies to gain insights into how they cultivate agility. This study contributes to the literature by providing new insights into organizational agility in the context of emerging economies, highlighting its importance for long-term competitiveness.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. Section 1 introduces the study by outlining the research problem and providing the context for the need for organizational agility in VUCA environments. Section 2 addresses the three key concepts of the paper — agility, resilience, and VUCA — by synthesizing relevant research and identifying the existing gaps in the literature. Section 3 details the methodology employed in this study, which adopts a qualitative approach to explore the experiences of Moroccan companies in managing agility and resilience. Section 4 presents the findings of the thematic analysis and discussion. Section 5 summarizes the key insights and describes the implications of the study for both theory and practice.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Organizational agility

According to Ganguly et al. (2009) and Barzi (2011), organizational agility presents itself as a response to an economic demand caused by a change in human behavior, driven by the digital revolution. According to Goldman et al. (1995), this evolution has an impact on organizations in terms of management

and innovation, confronting them with a world of complexity characterized by crises, social protests, a questioning of the principles of capitalism, and above all a formidable technological revolution. Faced with these unprecedented changes, many companies see agility as an essential element for survival in an uncertain environment (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999), seeking to establish a sustainable competitive advantage (Doz & Kosonen, 2008). It is emerging as an indispensable strategic response in the complex, dynamic landscape of contemporary organizations, where relentless challenges and evolving opportunities demand constant adaptation (Bundtzen & Hinrichs, 2021). Although its origins lie in software development, the concept of agility has evolved beyond its roots to become a comprehensive business philosophy (Sreenivasan & Suresh, 2024).

According to the work of Lawrence and Lorsch (1967), organizational agility is a way of modernizing production systems to cope with constant changes in the environment and new elements of competition. The word has been in use ever since. Manufacturers have had to adapt to various changes in production methods and society, particularly in the business world, in order to preserve their lifestyle and competitive edge. Agile manufacturing first appeared in the USA in 1991 in response to these developments (Ferrante, 2016). Since then, the concept of agile and/or agile has begun to spread in the field of management and organizations (Ferrante, 2016). Reflections on agility have also been put forward on several occasions. Agility has been described as a means of management, while in management science it is seen as a means of reflection and decision-making. According to Ben Mbarek (2022), it represents a business trend and sometimes a transformation project.

Work on organizational agility has focused on several dimensions such as agile business transformation (Ravichandran, 2018), organizational agility implementation, its determinants, capabilities, and practices. Authors such as Ferrante (2016) and Charbonnier-Voirin (2009) have focused on agility measurements and the proposal of measurement and evaluation models and methods.

Organizational agility is often linked to synonyms that refer to flexibility, ease of adaptation to situations and skill as an acrobat's quality (Ben Mbarek, 2022), and to the feeling of liveliness as a quality associated with action, which is linked to speed. Agility also refers to the feeling of handiness and lightness associated with rapid changes in form or content (Ben Mbarek, 2022). Organizational agility also appears as a form of domination, of co-opting resistance movements within organizations (Hamel & Välikangas, 2003), and of any activity based on flexibility, responsiveness and adaptability. We will adapt these components to our analytical framework.

A thorough understanding of organizational agility requires a careful examination of its various aspects. In fact, organizational agility is not a fixed term, but a complex reality that can take different forms in the context of an organization (Barzi, 2011).

Although the literature identifies agility as a key success factor in VUCA environments, many studies focus primarily on developed economies, neglecting the specific challenges faced by companies in emerging markets. Furthermore, the literature often considers agility as a universal solution, overlooking the contextual variations in the way it is implemented.

Although much has been written about organizational agility in developed economies, there is a lack of empirical studies focusing on how companies in emerging markets such as Morocco use agility to build resilience in VUCA environments. This article aims to fill this gap by exploring the specific practices of Moroccan companies.

## 2.2. Organizational resilience

Organizational resilience is a concept that has mainly emerged in the field of management science, particularly in crisis management and high-reliability organizations.

It explores the transition from individual-level analysis to an organizational and collective perspective, focusing on mechanisms that reduce the group's vulnerability to disruptions in meaning (Weick & Roberts, 1993). In addition, it studies a company's ability to take into account, react to and exploit disruptions caused by environmental changes (Lengnick-Hall & Beck, 2009; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2005; Dubey et al., 2014).

Despite the abundance of work exploring the concept of resilience, sometimes combined with other notions, the term "organizational resilience" only appeared for the first time in 1998, in the article by Mallak (1998b). In this article, the author highlights the factors that contribute to organizational resilience. Thus, for an organization to be resilient, it must have people capable of reacting quickly and effectively to change, while withstanding a minimal level of stress. In other words, resilience implies the development of a positive adaptive capacity that sets an organization apart from its competitors (Kone, 2021).

Despite its importance, the concept of organizational resilience remains a subject of debate due to the various definitions attributed to it and the difficulty of preventively measuring this capacity, although attempts have been made in this direction (Bégin & Chabaud, 2010).

Organizational resilience appears to be an essential element enabling organizations to overcome crises (Frimousse & Peretti, 2021). However, despite the growing interest shown by the proliferation of work on the subject, the concept remains complex and still lacks solid theoretical foundations (Therrien, 2010; Teneau & Dufour, 2019).

According to Therrien (2010), resilience is generally defined as the ability of a person or system to recover from shock and maintain stability despite a turbulent environment. It is a complex concept that has no universal definition, but refers to the ability of an entity — be it an individual, organization, community, system or other — to anticipate and react rapidly in the face of adversity while maintaining relatively normal functions (Maltais, 2022). According to Coutu (2002), resilient companies are distinguished by three characteristics: 1) they are pragmatic and face reality without being over-optimistic; 2) they have a solid system of shared values that gives meaning to the difficulties encountered; and 3) they are astute and know how to use their resources to find improvised solutions to unusual situations.

According to Mitroff (2005), in a competitive environment, a resilient organization is able to discern and/or create opportunities where others see only difficulties, thanks to a particular form of intelligence. Intelligent companies train themselves

to cope with crises during both good times and bad, thereby reducing their vulnerability to crises and preserving their profitability.

Two conceptions of organizational resilience are present in the literature. The initial conception involves the ability to bounce back from unforeseen, stressful and unfavorable situations in order to return to the initial situation. Organizations seek to adjust to the new reality by restricting ineffective behaviors. According to Frimousse and Peretti (2021), the second conception goes beyond the simple desire to bounce back and seeks to develop new capabilities and opportunities.

In the context of Moroccan companies, the study of organizational resilience and agility can be seen as the exploration of two fundamental dynamic capabilities. While resilience focuses on an organization's ability to cope with shocks and maintain stability in a turbulent environment, agility focuses on its ability to adapt quickly and effectively to change. In a VUCA context such as Morocco's, which is characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, these two skills become all the more significant. By studying these two aspects in Moroccan companies, we seek to understand how they approach changing challenges and how they use resilience and agility as levers to navigate a dynamic and competitive environment (El Madi & Batti, 2022; Nidaazzi & Hourmatallah, 2023). Thanks to this method, it will be possible to better understand the strategies and practices used by Moroccan companies to guarantee their sustainability and development in a constantly changing context. Factors influencing organizational resilience will also be taken into account in our study (El Madi & Batti, 2022; Nidaazzi & Hourmatallah, 2023). The study is based on Teece et al.'s (1997) dynamic capabilities theory, which argues that companies need to develop adaptive capabilities to adapt to rapidly changing environments. This corresponds to the concept of agility, according to which companies constantly reconfigure their resources to remain resilient and competitive in VUCA contexts.

### 2.3. The VUCA environment

The VUCA concept originated in America. Military universities were established to account for the increasingly VUCA multilateral world in which we live. After the Cold War ended, the multilateral world became more VUCA (Mwenje & Manyanga, 2023). The end of the Cold War resulted in 4,444 more unpredictable, complex, and ambiguous multilateral outcomes (Mwenje & Manyanga, 2023; Luthans & Broad, 2022). Since then, strategic business leaders have adopted the concept of VUCA to represent the chaotic, turbulent and ever-changing environment of the business world, making it the "new normal". However, you look at it, the chaotic "new normal" of the business world is a reality (Teneau & Dufour, 2019).

It's important to note that VUCA is not a method for applying a list of solutions, but rather a reading framework that enables us to describe and understand the environment in different dimensions (Bartscht, 2015). The "V" symbol in the acronym VUCA stands for *volatility*. It refers to the nature, pace, extent and magnitude of evolutions that do not fit into a predictable pattern. Volatility is a fluctuation, a phenomenon that occurs more frequently than ever before. Digitization, connectivity, trade liberalization, global competition and innovative

business models are all factors disrupting today's economy. According to Mwenje and Manyanga (2023), the "U" in the acronym VUCA symbolizes *uncertainty* and the lack of precision of a problem or event. During periods of uncertainty, forecasting, and decision-making are complicated. The "C" in VUCA stands for *complexity*. This degree of complexity makes decision-making even more difficult, as does the uncertainty surrounding change and the absence of historical indicators. This can lead to misunderstanding and obscure the last letter of the acronym. The "A" — *ambiguity* — is the absence of clarity; the situation is imprecise and difficult to assess (Mwenje & Manyanga, 2023).

The characteristics of the acronym VUCA therefore seem to help explain the world in which we currently operate, a world in which projects, strategies and priorities are constantly evolving, and very rapidly, in a world where the only way to maintain performance is to evolve rapidly and find the perfect balance between agility and complexity. In a VUCA state, all efforts to understand the future and plan a response are redundant (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014).

As our world continues to face constant disruption, leaders are looking for the best way to guide their organizations through uncertainty. Understanding the internal and external dynamics at play is essential to this challenging task, while being constantly aware of emerging perspectives. To effectively navigate a VUCA environment, it is essential that leaders at all levels take proactive steps to identify and resolve potential obstacles, as well as to implement practices that promote agility (Pascalau, 2023). By following these three interconnected steps — recognizing the unique circumstances of VUCA, identifying obstacles to agility and implementing reinforcing practices — leaders can successfully lead their organizations through turbulent times (Baran & Woznyj, 2021).

The current VUCA market trends are what are driving the need for business agility. Large businesses are facing more pressure from the competition in all industries. The disruption of global innovators is contributing to these pressures and changing market dynamics, particularly through start-ups that can compete by targeting niche markets, combining them with customer focus and leveraging new technologies (Ciampi et al., 2022). This lowers the barriers to entry, enabling startups to compete on a large scale with large traditional companies (D'Oliveira et al., 2022). As a result, businesses must operate nimbly in this volatile and uncertain climate and reconsider the kinds of leadership that work best in certain circumstances (Attar & Abdul-Kareem, 2020).

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach aimed at exploring the subject, identifying avenues for future research and generating new ideas. It focuses specifically on Moroccan companies operating internationally and domestically. Qualitative research is particularly well suited to this investigation, as it enables us to explore in depth the complexities surrounding organizational agility and resilience in a VUCA environment.

To understand the link between these concepts, our investigation took the form of semi-structured interviews with 10 companies using agility. We collected data from the managers of these

companies from different sectors, using NVivo qualitative analysis software. To ensure reliable data collection, we tried to reach saturation in the field. The aim was not to report on reality as a whole, but to collect enough data to explain this reality without adding new data that would alter this interpretation. Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives of companies renowned for their flexible policies and practices and agile management, operating in various fields such as industry, civil engineering, higher education, consulting and training, ICT in education, commerce, robotics and artificial intelligence, public administration, governance and transformation consulting, banking and finance.

Participants were selected on the basis of the following criteria: 1) holding a managerial position within a Moroccan organization, and 2) having agreed to voluntarily complete an online semi-structured interview form. Although information was exchanged online, the questions on the form were organized to orient participants and gather relevant information about the research topic.

To preserve the confidentiality of responses, each participant was assigned a unique identification code. This guarantees the anonymity of participants, while enabling confidential analysis of the data collected.

As part of the data analysis, we sorted the content according to the themes previously identified in the theoretical framework. These themes include flexibility, responsiveness and adaptability in a VUCA environment, managing this environment with an agile approach, and leveraging agility to build organizational resilience.

There are a number of limitations worth considering in this study. Firstly, despite our efforts to contact a wide range of companies, it is possible that some key representatives were not available to participate in the interviews, which could restrict the diversity of perspectives gathered. Furthermore, the voluntary nature of participation may introduce a selection bias, where only those individuals most interested or involved in the topic choose to participate. Furthermore, although we interviewed representatives of companies from different sectors, the sample size may not be representative of the Moroccan business ecosystem as a whole, limiting the generalizability of the results. Finally, conducting the interviews online via a form could lead to response bias, where participants might be inclined to provide socially desirable answers rather than genuinely honest or divergent opinions.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches could have provided a broader perspective. This option may be considered for future research in the confirmatory phase, where the qualitative findings will be tested and validated with a larger sample.

#### 4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results we have obtained are classified into three themes: 1) the difficulties of adapting and reacting to the VUCA environment, 2) agility and resilience as strategic responses, and 3) the practices and skills required to navigate in a VUCA environment.

##### 4.1. Theme 1: Moroccan companies and their adaptation to the VUCA environment

In a VUCA context, all the companies surveyed have undergone an evolution and adjusted their working methods. Implementing agility and resilience strategies is essential to evolve effectively in a VUCA environment, they say. Adapted training programs, effective talent retention strategies and proactive management of legislative and fiscal changes are essential. In addition, the ability to adapt quickly to unforeseen changes and preserve financial stability is essential to survival in an unstable and volatile environment.

Interviewee E2 says: *"VUCA can have many effects on the corporate world. Firstly, it can be very difficult for organizations to adapt quickly to the constant and unforeseen changes that can occur in a volatile environment. This can lead to confusion and uncertainty for us and the company's staff, who have to navigate a complex and often ambiguous environment. The VUCA environment can also make decision-making difficult, as there are often many uncertain and unpredictable factors to take into account"* (personal communication, January 2, 2023). Interviewee E2 highlights various obstacles created by the VUCA environment. VUCA is characterized by its ability to adapt rapidly to constant and unforeseen change. Company managers and staff are confronted with this difficulty, which leads to confusion and uncertainty. Operating in a complex and often ambiguous context, it also becomes more complex to make decisions due to the many uncertain and unpredictable elements to be taken into consideration. To adapt effectively and maintain business performance, it is essential to have greater organizational agility and resilience in this situation.

Interviewee E7 notes: *"...The effects of VUCA are detrimental, in the sense that no company, regardless of headcount, size or industry, the effects are direct in relation to EBIT [earnings before interest and taxes] and EBITDA [earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization]"* (personal communication, January 11, 2023).

According to E7, VUCA has a direct financial impact on companies, regardless of size or sector. In particular, the negative effects are felt on key financial indicators such as EBIT and EBITDA. This finding suggests that VUCA can have a considerable impact on companies' profitability and financial performance, making it essential to adopt agility and resilience strategies to reduce these consequences.

Interviewee E9 lists: *"...Inadequacy of training programs with the demands of the modern workplace; high staff turnover rate due to young employees not being sufficiently qualified; difficulty in capturing, recruiting and retaining talent; stagnation of average salaries and decline in work performance; price instability; relative legal and fiscal instability following changes in legislation..."* (personal communication, January 12, 2023) — these specific problems identified by interviewee E9 call for a high degree of flexibility and adaptability, particularly in managing human resources and reacting to market variations. The inadequacy of training programs and the difficulty of attracting and retaining skilled talent highlight the need for companies to be flexible in their approach to skills

development. It is also essential to be able to adjust to price instability and legislative changes. Companies face many challenges in the VUCA environment, as the interviewees' responses underline. Interviewee E2 highlights the difficulty organizations have in adapting quickly to constant and unforeseen change, which can lead to confusion and uncertainty. According to interviewee E7, the effects of VUCA have a direct influence on companies' financial results, regardless of their size or sector of activity.

According to interviewee E9, the growing complexity of working environments compounds these challenges, highlighting the inadequacy of current training programs, high staff turnover rates and price instability. These elements prevent companies from recruiting and retaining talent, which has an impact on their overall performance.

#### 4.2. Theme 2: Agility and resilience as strategic responses

In the face of the difficulties already mentioned, companies need to demonstrate flexibility, responsiveness and adaptability. The stories of interviewees E8, E3, and E7 underline the close correlation between agility and resilience within the organization. According to E8 and E3, agility is seen as the foundation of resilience, enabling companies to bounce back thanks to their ability to evolve and adjust. According to E7, there is a correlation between agility and resilience, where the more agile a company is, the more resilient it is.

Responses from respondents E8, E3, and E7 underline the close correlation between agility and resilience:

Interviewee E8 states: *"...The link between agility and resilience is very close. It is even possible to argue that resilience is built on agility..."* (personal communication, January 11, 2023).

According to interviewee E8, agility is the basis of resilience. This underscores the importance of a company's ability to adjust quickly and effectively to change in strengthening its resilience.

Interviewee E3 says: *"...In my opinion, resilience implies the need for agility, a strong correlation there is, bouncing back thanks to our ability to change and adapt..."* (personal communication, January 3, 2023).

Interviewee E3 supports this idea, highlighting the fact that resilience inevitably requires agility. Resilience in the face of disruption is directly linked to the ability to evolve and adjust.

Interviewee E7 points to a direct relationship between adaptability and resilience. A company's agility increases its resilience. This highlights the importance of organizational agility in building resilience to the challenges of VUCA.

Interviewee E7: *"...It's much more than a simple link, it's a real correlation that exists between the two, in the sense that the more agile the company, the greater its resilience, the less agile the less resilient it is"* (personal communication, January 11, 2023).

#### 4.3. Theme 3: Practices and skills needed to navigate in a VUCA environment

Interviewee E10's emphasis on digitalization and learning new skills is another crucial element in business adaptation. Companies need to take swift action, develop new skills and reinvent their working methods to remain relevant and competitive in the post-pandemic world.

Interviewee E10: *"...Today, digitalization is a must, a strategic issue and a key investment topic for organizations in all sectors. The post-pandemic world presents an opportunity for a fresh start. In our view, the role of agility in this sense translates into: acting quickly, acquiring new skills and capabilities, reinventing new ways of working"* (personal communication, January 14, 2023).

Interviewee E5: *"...Several capabilities and skills can help organizations thrive in this kind of environment: adaptability — this means being open to new ideas, changes in strategy and continuous learning. Also, collaboration — it's often difficult to know everything or do everything alone. You need to be well surrounded by a managerial layer capable of delegating the right tasks to the right people. The analytical and critical mindset provides the ability to question old assumptions and beliefs, in order to better understand and navigate an uncertain world..."* (personal communication, January 9, 2023).

The contributions of interviewees E5, E1, and E4 demonstrate how particular methods can foster this adaptability. E5 values skills such as adaptability, collaboration and an analytical, critical mindset in order to cope with an uncertain world. Interviewee E1 stresses the importance of specific, measurable, achievable and time-bound (SMART) objectives to clarify and guide actions, while interviewee E4 emphasizes the importance of agility in their consulting business, which requires constant reflection and innovation to offer solutions.

Interviewee E1: *"...We define pragmatic, specific, measurable, achievable and time-bound (SMART) annual objectives. This gives us visibility and enables us to easily define the targets we're aiming for, and therefore the action plan for each target, which we execute and adapt according to constraints"* (personal communication, December 24, 2023).

Interviewee E5: *"...The foundation could not have achieved its current status without a very successful application of the collective mind, both in its internal dynamics between the heads of its various departments and their staff, and its external dynamics with its many partners, which today number over two hundred and fifty (250) partners made up of national and foreign institutions and organizations..."* (personal communication, January 9, 2023).

Interviewee E4: *"...Yes, agility is the very essence of our business. As a consulting firm, our role is to propose effective, relevant solutions to our customers' various problems. So, on a daily basis, we have to brainstorm and benchmark, and propose new solutions and services, in order to remain agile and resilient in all areas..."* (personal communication, January 9, 2023).

In this way, the companies analyzed demonstrate that they need to develop relentless flexibility, responsiveness and adaptability to survive and thrive in a VUCA context. It seems that the agile approach meets these needs while enhancing their efficiency. Companies can react quickly to change, innovate continuously and adapt proactively to new conditions thanks to agile strategies, thereby strengthening their organizational resilience and their ability to navigate successfully in a complex and uncertain environment.

The answers provided by the interview participants have enabled us to gain a better understanding of how companies are managing

the VUCA environment by adopting an agile approach, while also highlighting several limitations to this approach. Below we analyze these limitations.

The difficulty of adapting quickly to constant and unforeseen change was raised by respondent E2, who emphasized the complexity of rapid adaptation. Staff can be confused and uncertain in the face of this complexity, limiting effective and rapid decision-making. Companies, therefore, need to adapt quickly, while preserving internal clarity and stability to avoid any disruption to the organization.

In addition, interviewee E7 highlighted the direct effect of VUCA conditions on company finances, particularly on indicators such as EBIT and EBITDA. Organizational agility, while indispensable, can sometimes require considerable investment that does not immediately yield positive financial benefits. It is therefore crucial that companies reconcile agility-related expenditure with potential profits. Interviewee E9 also raised the issue of inadequate training and high staff turnover. Current training does not meet labor market requirements, leading to high staff turnover and problems in recruiting and retaining talent. Continuous and appropriate training is therefore essential to maintain a skilled and flexible workforce. Without it, companies risk failing to keep pace with rapid change and losing valuable talent.

In addition, interviewee E5 mentioned the importance of various skills that are essential for success in a VUCA context, such as adaptability, collaboration, and an analytical and critical mindset. Creating and improving these skills on a large scale can be complex and costly. It is also necessary to have a corporate culture that upholds these values. Interviewee E1 also stressed the importance of SMART objectives to provide visibility and define precise actions. However, despite their usefulness, SMART objectives need to be adaptable in order to adjust quickly to changes in the VUCA environment. Planning that is too rigid can restrict the company's responsiveness. Finally, interviewee E4 highlighted the importance of continuous innovation to maintain flexibility and resilience. The constant quest for innovation can be an exhausting and demanding process for companies, requiring significant resources in terms of time, money and creative energy.

Despite agility's ability to respond effectively to the challenges posed by the VUCA environment, it does have its limitations. Companies have to make the choice between adapting quickly and maintaining internal stability, balancing expenses and profits, and investing in skills and continuous training while preserving their innovative strength. It is essential to manage these limitations in order to strengthen the organization's resilience and ensure an agile and effective response to constant changes in the environment.

The results are discussed as part of an effort to understand the complex dynamics between agility, resilience and challenges in the VUCA environment faced by Moroccan companies. Participants' responses highlighted the different strategies implemented to enhance agility in a diverse and dynamic sector.

In a VUCA environment and an ever-changing landscape characterized by digital acceleration and the health crisis affecting all sectors, companies need to be resourceful constantly seek out opportunities in society, and even know how to turn threats into opportunities. Consequently,

adaptability and agility are essential qualities, all the more necessary in difficult times. According to the results of our study, we note that:

- By using data and technology, digitization promotes agility, as it increases the agility and responsiveness of an organization's business processes, such as by spotting changes at the main source, and fosters effective and efficient connectivity and coordination.

- Flexibility is a multi-disciplinary concept that encompasses agility and represents an organization's ultimate overall goal. Consequently, resilience is also defined in terms of economic, environmental and social resilience.

- An organization's ability to manage change more proactively, effectively and efficiently for the purposes of transformation and innovation underpins agility, a strategic aspect of resilience. It includes the notion of how quickly an organization can react to change.

In response to our research question, we can conclude that the less agile a company is, the less resilient it is. Resilient companies, or those wishing to become resilient, need to adopt agile practices, especially in an ever-changing environment that has impacted all the companies we contacted, forcing them to undertake and act differently. As they say, the people who survive are neither the smartest nor the strongest, but those who manage to adapt to change. Without agility in a digital growth process, we considerably increase the risk of creating solutions that are consistent but not adapted to the context (like killing a fly with a cannon).

## 5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research highlights the complex link between agility, resilience and the challenges posed by the VUCA environment for Moroccan companies. According to the findings, agility is an essential response to the constant pressures of the contemporary business world, offering companies the ability to adapt quickly to change. However, agility alone does not guarantee total resilience. Companies must also cultivate resilience capabilities, such as effective disruption management and a commitment to continuous learning.

The VUCA environment perpetually puts organizations to the test, with rapid changes driven by the digital revolution and various crises impacting the economic, political and technological spheres. The most agile companies can identify and exploit the challenges and opportunities of this volatile landscape, both for their own benefit and that of their employees. Building a resilient organization requires managers to embrace agility, employ new methods and technologies, and seek continuous innovation.

The main value of this article lies in its exploration of how organizational agility contributes directly to the strategic resilience of Moroccan companies operating in a VUCA environment. By focusing on an understudied geographical and cultural context, this study provides new insights into the operationalization of agility in developing markets, offering practical strategies for organizations facing similar conditions on a global scale.

It is essential to put in place an ecosystem that can adapt and resist, particularly in times of crisis, as the recent pandemic proved. However, this study has a number of limitations. For example, it ignores

all the circumstances impacting agile businesses in Morocco, nor does it distinguish by type of service or facility. Future research should delve deeper into these aspects, improving our knowledge of the theoretical and managerial contributions of

agility and resilience in a VUCA world. In addition, examining the adjustment strategies needed to respond to crises beyond organizational agility would provide a more comprehensive understanding.

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