

## EXPLORING THE RELEVANCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE IN MANAGEMENT RESEARCH – LITERATURE REVIEW

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**Purpose:** The paper aims to investigate the significance of organizational resilience and to explore its relation with existing organizational theory concepts related to change and uncertainty for a comprehensive understanding of organizational adaptation.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The objectives were achieved through a focused rapid literature review emphasizing the latest publications. The main method employed involved searching for key concepts, followed by a discussion that explored their interconnections with organizational resilience. The approach to the topic was characterized by a thorough examination of recent literature, aiming to identify and analyze relevant concepts.

**Findings:** The conducted study enabled the identification and presentation of the key concepts related to management research associated with organizational resilience. These encompass Dynamic Capabilities, Resource-Based View, Ambidexterity, and Organizational Learning Capability. Significant relationships were identified among these concepts, expanding the understanding of the broad research context in this field.

**Research limitations/implications:** Considering the limitation of the rapid review done, the study is based on the latest works serving as literature reviews. Further research is needed, particularly in expanding the scope to encompass a comprehensive literature review.

**Originality/value:** The study explores the relationship between organizational resilience and other related concepts. The results can be useful for both researchers and practitioners in this field.

**Keywords:** organizational resilience, dynamic capabilities, resource-based view, ambidexterity, organizational learning capability.

**Category of the paper:** Literature review.

### 1. Introduction

The subject of uncertainty stands out as a recurring focal point in management literature, serving as one of driving forces for scholarly investigations and practical engagements. This article corresponds with this trend, given the contemporary challenges faced by businesses,

such as climate policy, pandemics and wars, which necessitate responses. In the search for new survival methods in business, organizational resilience has gained momentum in both popularity and scientific publications (Su, Junge, 2023). Despite the growing number of works on this subject, a precise definition of what characterizes organizational resilience is still lacking (Hillmann, Guenther, 2021). It is suggested that the concept seems to be intuitively understood (Ingram, 2023), and each stream of research has generated its own definition of organizational resilience (Linnenluecke, 2017, p. 22). Given the confusion, lack of coherence, and multitude of approaches in addressing the uncertainty-related topic, the question arises as to whether organizational resilience is of significance, relevance, within the domain of management research. Existing literature reviews indicate the importance of research in a broad context (Hepfer, Lawrence, 2022), within the context of organizational theory (Zinn, 2022) and in various specific contexts such as higher education (Shaya et al., 2022) or family businesses (Beech et al., 2020; Ingram, Bratnicka-Mysliwiec, 2019). Against this background, it becomes essential to ask how the concept of organizational resilience can be integrated with existing research on organizational theory and what common or unique aspects it may possess. This is also a research direction indicated by Hillmann and Guenther in their work (2021, p. 32) and the author's goal is to attempt to synthesize current concepts related to change and uncertainty and organizational resilience to better understand how organizations adapt to changes in the environment or turbulent conditions.

## 2. Methods

For the purposes of conducting the study, a decision was made to utilize a rapid literature review, which will be focused on identifying other concepts related to organizational resilience within this review. The first step involves a rapid review focused on analyzing reviews published since 2020 and the most cited articles. This stage aims to identify potential concepts associated with change, uncertainty, and organizational resilience. In the second stage, an attempt was made to organize the existing concepts related to organizational resilience and to assess their consistency with organizational resilience, as well as whether they complement each other. As basis for article selection, Scopus and Web of Science were chosen.

In the first step, a search for "*organi?ation\* resilience*" keyword was done to find the number of existing literature. This choice enables the search for articles considering the spelling differences of the term in British English and United States English, as well as any variations of the concept. Given the exploratory nature of the study, no effort was made to bifurcate the term to exclusively focus on the aspect associated with "organizational resilience" as an emerging concept. This approach also allows for complementing work already done in other reviews (Ingram, 2023) on this topic by systematizing it only in this specific direction.

The subsequent steps of rapid systematic review and the number of results is presented in the table 1. The restrictive approach allowed for the selection of the most crucial literature reviews in recent years. In the final step (7), a decision was made to exclude publications focused on the theme of psychological resilience of entrepreneurs and discussion papers.

**Table 1.**

*The subsequent steps of a rapid systematic literature review and the number of results*

Review steps	Number of results	
	Scopus	WOS
1. Results for "organization* resilience" (years: 2000-2024)	1699	1423
2. Results for "organization* resilience" (years: 2020-2024)	1118	900
3. Narrowing to English language and review	64	55
4. Narrowing to: Business, Management and Accounting" (Scopus), „Management" and „Business" (WOS)	14	17
5. Narrowing to literature reviews cited 2 or more times	7	11
6. Number of literature reviews with no duplicates	15	
7. Number of literature reviews after abstract verification.	<b>12</b>	

Source: Own work on a basis of Scopus and Web of Science search engines (December 2023).

### 3. Results of literature review

The first group of literature selected within the review refers to the mentioned before lack of precise definition. The first examined review is engaged in exploring the intricacies of defining and conceptualizing the resilience of firms in the business and management (Conz, Magnani, 2020). Authors refer to the unveiling four distinct categories. These categories encompass resilience as a proactive attribute possessed before an event, an adaptive or absorptive attribute owned during an event, a reactive attribute owned after an event, and a dynamic attribute spanning across all temporal phases. In summary, Conz & Magnani's work expounds on how the resilience of enterprises unfolds along two dynamic trajectories – absorptive and adaptive – both of which are equally effective in achieving favorable adaptations following a disruptive event. This underscores the intricate and multifaceted nature of organizational resilience.

Next examined review also looks for definition of organizational resilience while underscore the varied influences of different disciplines on the understanding and application of the organizational resilience concept. Each of recognized disciplines, including the Ecological perspective, Safety and reliability perspective, Resilience Engineering perspective, Positive Psychology and Organizational Development perspective, and the Strategic perspective, brings its own ontologies and methodologies. Consequently, the diverse applications of the concept result in discrepancies in comprehending the nature and challenges of organizational resilience (Hillmann, 2021).

Many researchers navigate through various resilience definitions before selecting one for their specific study. Saad et al. (2021) underscores this challenge, emphasizing the diverse approach to resilience across some various disciplines. The notion of resilience in entrepreneurship, frequently utilized to characterize firms' economic performance and responsiveness amid specific shocks like financial crises and recessions, has contributed to the complexity of defining and understanding resilience in organizational studies. It is “an ability of firms to bounce back from such a specific “disruption”” (Saad et al., 2021). However, a notable gap exists, particularly in literature adopting a strategic perspective, where an abundance of definitions and conceptualizations coexists, making it challenging to position individual papers within the broader resilience discourse (Hillmann, 2021). This is in some point addressed by the paper of Hepfer and Lawrence (2022) who explore the conceptualization of organizational resilience by identifying three distinct forms: functional resilience, operational resilience, and strategic resilience. Functional resilience pertains to the capacity of a specific organizational function or system to positively respond to adversity independently of others. Operational resilience involves an organization's ability to respond positively to adversity affecting its overall functioning, potentially jeopardizing its continued operations. Lastly, strategic resilience refers to an organization's capability to anticipate and respond to threats against its long-term goals and strategy, emphasizing adaptability in the face of unexpected challenges that may undermine competitive advantage (Hepfer, Lawrence, 2022).

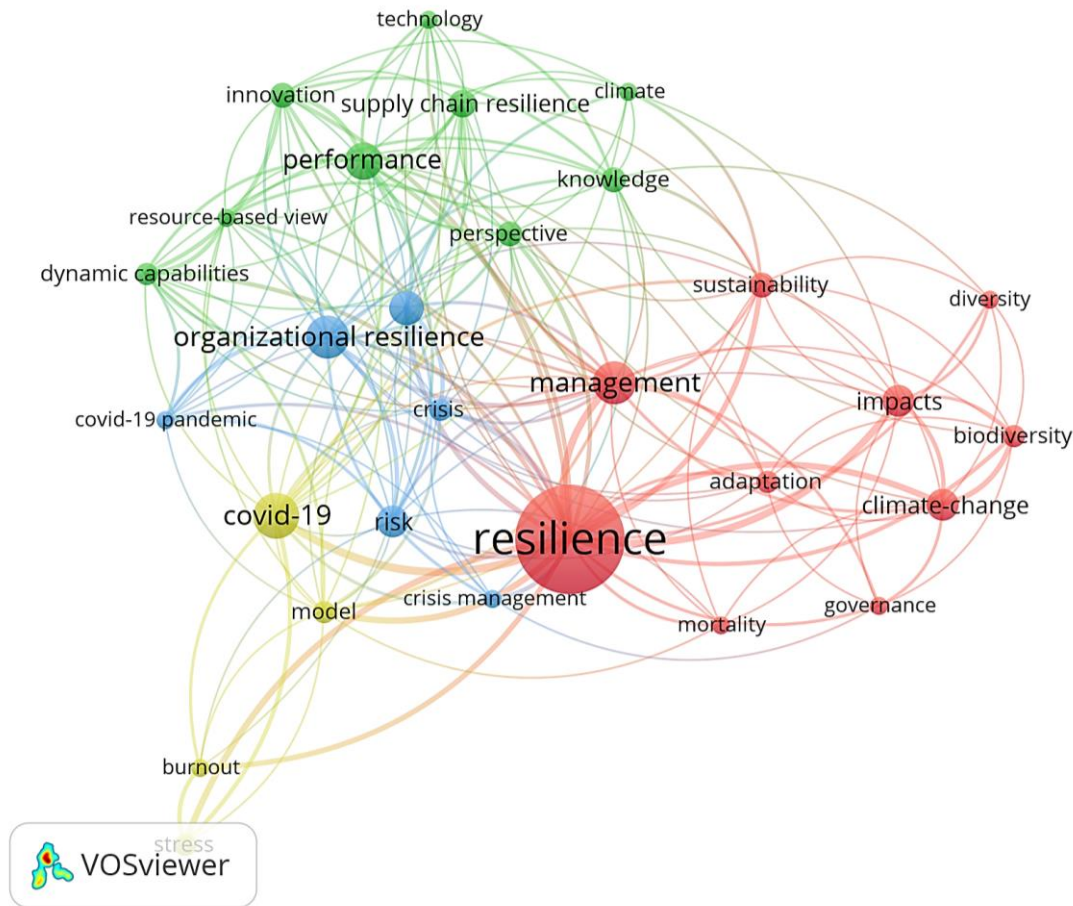
The second set of works may be formed using ones that addresses some specific contexts. The one with positive title *How to emerge stronger* addresses Organizational Learning Capability (OLC). It investigates the less-explored connection between resilience and outcomes of organizational performance. The research reveals that OLC plays a mediating role in this relationship. The research shows that OLC plays an intermediary role in this relationship. The findings suggest that resilience improves learning capacity by encouraging experimentation, risk-taking, environmental interaction, dialogue, open communication and participatory decision-making (Rodriguez-Sanchez et al., 2021). Another concept arises from work of Gichuhi (2021) who take into consideration the growing interest in leadership approaches in the existing literature regarding the correlation between shared leadership and organizational resilience. The model presented underscores the diverse contexts in which shared leadership operates, emphasizing not only decision-making processes but also the crucial aspects of transformation and the exploitation of new ideas to bolster a firm's absorptive capacity in anticipation of an uncertain future. In some way, building on this thread, the discussion extends beyond the realm of leadership to encompass the broader theme of collaboration. In reference to this, the paper delves not only into the nuances of leadership but also the expansive landscape of collaboration. The significance of collaborative networks becomes evident at each level, emphasizing their crucial role (Candeias Fernandes, Franco, 2022).

Some works introduce interest in focusing on the impact of managerial overconfidence on organizational capabilities, decision-making, and action-taking. The study of Kunz & Sonnenholzner (2023) aims to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between managerial overconfidence and organizational resilience. Other highlights the growing interest in innovation ambidexterity in management research, emphasizing its importance for adaptability and competitiveness. The review identifies seven main determinants for managing ambidexterity, including process mechanisms, organizational learning, leadership styles, technology investments, organizational contexts, environmental uncertainties, and institutional pressures. (Saleh et al., 2023)

In the group of selected papers there are also works limited in scope, the study by Shela et al. (2023) delves into human capital and organizational resilience within the specific domain of manufacturing. Khlystova et al. (2022) scrutinize the creative industries through the lens of resilience theory. However, their work is constrained by the absence of research on the economic impacts of the pandemic on entrepreneurs and small businesses within these industries. It underscores the necessity for further investigation. In the realm of SME resilience at tourist destinations, Badoc-Gonzales et al. (2022) identify strategies encompassing the emphasis on human capital, network strengthening, enhancement of social resilience, efficient resource utilization, provision of funds for environmental resilience, establishment of a robust legal framework, promotion of collaboration, and securing government support for governance resilience. However, the limitations of these findings must be recognized and their applicability within the given context.

To summarize results of this rapid review - synthesis of current literature reveals several key concepts. First to mention are dynamic capabilities. This concept is presented in works by Saad et al. (2021) and Shela et al. (2023) who underscores the categorization of resilience into operational and dynamic capabilities. Organizational learning capability (OLC), as expounded by Rodriguez-Sanchez et al. (2021), emerges as a critical factor influencing firm performance, with performance feedback acting as a catalyst for enhanced organizational learning and resilience, as articulated by Gichuhi (2021). Furthermore, the significance of shared leadership, elucidated both by Gichuhi (2021) and Saleh et al. (2023), surfaces as a contributing element to organizational adaptability in the face of uncertainties. The concept of ambidexterity discussed by Saleh et al. (2023), adds another dimension to the synthesis, emphasizing the need for organizations to balance exploration and exploitation activities.

To confirm the comprehensiveness of the chosen concepts, a graphical analysis of the most popular scientific articles, without restricting the search to literature reviews, was conducted (Figure 1). This additional step aims to verify the recurrence of certain concepts and identify if any crucial elements might be missing from the synthesized understanding. As key concepts capable of integration in research on organizational resilience, the keywords "dynamic capabilities" and "resource-based view" seem evident in Figure 1. Considering the number of papers and the number of connections, the concept of organizational resilience is an important element of management research.



**Figure 1.** A keyword network map for the 99 most cited publications addressing the topic of organizational resilience according to Web of Science (English language, keywords: organizational resilience, organisational resilience, years: 2020-2024; VOSviewer software was employed; data collected in December 2023).

#### 4. Integrating Resilience in Management Research

The concept of organizational resilience is directly linked to the natural sciences, where the term refers to the "physical system's ability to return to its original form after experiencing disruption" (Barasa et al., 2018). The multifaceted nature of resilience, which also encompasses individual, social, and territorial resilience, makes organizational resilience one of many types of resilience, albeit characteristic of organizations (Ingram, 2023). Resilience addresses the theme of variability and uncertainty, which can be associated with concepts aiming to explain how organizations cope with changes in a turbulent environment. Over the course of time and research numerous concepts have emerged so utilizing the rapid literature review mentioned above along other related concepts found in literature, an effort was made to determine if the current ideas of variability and uncertain environments are compatible with the concept of organizational resilience.

#### **4.1. Dynamic capabilities (DCs)**

The organizational resilience perspective provides a framework for perceiving it not only as a return to "homeostasis" but also as development despite adversity. Resilience in this context allows for leveraging crisis experience as a kind of entrepreneurial mindset to embrace growth challenges. This positive context enables the connection of resilience with DCs, actively reconfiguring resources in face of change (Barasa et al., 2018; Manfield, 2016). DCs can have a significant relationship with organizational resilience but this necessitates distinction. According to some studies, resilience is regarded as a dynamic capability, whereas others exemplify that dynamic capabilities have an influence on resilience (Ingram, 2023). It is a challenging task to definitively declare which concept encompasses the other, however, at this stage, a strong interdependence between both concepts is visible.

The investigation of the link between DCs and OR in literature indicates that studies on the volatile market environment shows different forms of DCs. These include replicating, integrating, reconfiguring, generating, and renewing, which play a role in constructing and maintaining organizational resilience in challenging situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Prayag i in., 2023). Similar results has been shown in work of García-Valenzuela et al (2023). In the study, they particularly emphasize the innovation capability which is presented as the most influential factor for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in enhancing their OR. In other works DCs contribute to the construction of resilience through sensemaking (Wulandhari et al., 2023) and can be promoted by organizational model that enhances resilience by placing human capital at the center (Baravelli et al., 2022). The examination of the relationship between DCs and OR, expanding on the earlier rapid review, suggests a crucial linkage to resource-based view on management.

#### **4.2. Resource-based view (RBV)**

RBV can provide a theoretical framework for how different types of resources, also capabilities, can contribute to organizational resilience. RBV highlights the importance of unique combinations of resources and capabilities in creating competitive advantages for organizations (Vargas-Hernández, Ali, 2022). On the other hand, organizational resilience focuses on the organization's ability to adapt and respond to challenges and disruptions, emphasizing the adaptive aspect (Wang et al., 2023). In that theme resources are described in the literature as the "source" and "carrier" of organizational resilience (Ingram, 2023, p. 32). In other works, physical and non-physical resources, such as human and organizational resources, can contribute to a firm's competitive advantage and its ability to withstand and recover from crises (Patnaik et al., 2022). The RBV acknowledges the role of DCs in mitigating the impact of institutional changes, which can also contribute to organizational resilience (Ahmed et al., 2022) Also the perspective of DCs complements the resource-based approach in building organizational resilience (Do et al., 2022).

Resources appear to be a crucial component in the three identified forms of organizational resilience, specifically operational resilience and strategic resilience (Hepfer, Lawrence, 2022). Organization's assets play an important role in strengthening operational resilience, such as financial flexibility and organizational framework. From the strategic point of view the works of Hepfer and Lawrence highlight the organizations' governance structures and processes, as well as organization's business model.

### **4.3. Ambidexterity**

The concept of ambidexterity, as discussed above on work on Saleh et al. (2023) emphasize the need for organizations to balance exploration and exploitation strategies for resilience. The same concept also appears to naturally emerge within the context of the previously mentioned RBV and DCs. Ultimately, it is the idea to create various combinations of resources that dynamically respond to changing conditions. Combining organizational resilience and ambidexterity into a unified framework aids organizations and management in addressing uncertainty by enhancing resilience at strategic and operational level (Colberg, 2022). It is also mentioned that ambidexterity can provide a framework for generating resilient behaviors in the face of disruption and uncertainty. It is found to be a powerful determinant of business resilience, particularly for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (Gayed, El Ebrashi, 2022; Sijinjak et al., 2022).

Moreover, ambidexterity is connected to the promotion of IT capabilities, which in turn enhances organizational resilience and SME performance. The management of ambidextrous organizations necessitates consideration of multiple factors, such as process mechanisms, organizational learning, leadership styles, technology investments, organizational contexts, environmental uncertainties, and institutional pressures (Trieu et al., 2023). In summary, it seems that ambidexterity leans towards fostering resilience development as it generates behaviors necessitated by the environment but despite mentioned relations it is crucial to highlight that there is a scarcity of research definitively indicating the mechanisms through which organizational ambidexterity may promote organizational resilience (Zhaxylyk, 2020).

### **4.4. Organizational learning capability (OLC)**

OLC as stated by Rodriguez-Sanchez et al. (2021), plays a critical role in firms performance. Learning is connected to resilience through the capabilities that organizations must possess and develop. It plays an essential role in enabling the necessary changes and DCs. The alignment and management of an organization's knowledge base are crucial for adaptation and renewal, which in turn support organizational resilience (Douglas, Haley, 2024). Learning is connected to all three stages of resilience: anticipation, coping, and adaptation (Evenseth et al., 2022). To build the renewal or adaptation domain of organizational resilience, organizations must embody learning into a capability (Douglas, Haley, 2024). It suggests that learning is ongoing across all stages of a disruption and that organizations need to continuously learn and improve



their learning abilities to navigate through disruptions and build resilience. It emphasizes the importance of appropriate management of experiential learning, a systemic approach to learning, the ability to unlearn, and the existence of a context that facilitates organizational learning for effective learning and resilience (Evenseth et al., 2022).

As it was examined as a OLC being the results of organizational resilience (Rodriguez-Sanchez et al., 2021) but with emphasis also to the opinion that OR can indeed be learned and making effective learning a crucial driver in building resilience (Evenseth et al., 2022). Worth mentioning in this context is also the importance of performance feedback as a catalyst for organizational learning and resilience, as Gichuhi (2021) argued.

#### **4.5. Other**

It should be noted that the above contexts do not cover all the contexts found in literature review. Although they are less commonly addressed in the literature. The significance of shared leadership, elucidated by both Gichuhi (2021) and Saleh et al. (2023), surfaces as a contributing element to organizational adaptability in the face of uncertainties. Following the post-COVID-19 analysis, the importance of agility, collaboration, and situational awareness and decentralization is also one of set mentioned as ones increasing resilience. Notably, it is underscored in work of Adana et al. (2024) that capabilities play a more substantial role in influencing resilience during the pandemic compared to the pre-pandemic period. The importance of collaborative networks is clear at every level, highlighting their critical role (Candeias Fernandes, Franco, 2022).

Among other works, which were not covered in detail, the work of Li & Lin (2023) is worth to mention because from the perspective of resilience, RBV and DCs it identifies the process mechanism of flexibility-oriented human resource management systems that are positively correlated with intellectual capital and OR. Moreover, their work introduces the concept of digital capability as a contextual element to comprehend how intellectual capital influences organizational resilience. It offers perspectives for future research. In the theme of digital capabilities there is also research available on IT competencies. Together with ambidexterity it strengthens resilience, contributing to increased responsiveness and reduced missed opportunities (Trieu et al., 2023).

## **5. Discussion**

Main point of discussion is related to the entire concept of OR. It has faced criticism due to its lack of clear conceptual definition and operationalization (Hillmann, Guenther, 2021). It remains uncertain whether OR can be understood as an umbrella term encompassing all other concepts. There is no consensus if it is merely one of DCs or it creates DCs. The same lack of

a unified position is also visible among other concepts such as innovation or entrepreneurship (Barasa et al., 2018; Ingram, 2023). These contradictory perspectives on this relation may be the result of differences in approach of researchers dealing with this topic. However, it does reveal that as research on volatile and uncertain environment became more popular, a consensus in management research is needed to intensify work on OR.

Second main critique involves the need for greater clarity in terms of measurement of OR. This also seems to be a consequence of the lack of a consistent definition (Hillmann, Guenther, 2021) and because papers are built with focus on specific industries and contexts (Garcia-Perez et al., 2023; Ingram et al., 2023; Shela et al., 2023). This settings may reduce the clarity and broad applicability of the work results. Overall more research is required to address these critiques.

This research was also based on a rapid literature review, which, due to the desire to achieve the goal, was limited to the newest literature reviews. It was done this way not to replicate or refresh the previous works but in order to summarize the most critical concepts related to OR. The key elements have been organized within a unified context. The findings presented in section four align with those of earlier studies, as exemplified in the work done by Ingram (2023). Nevertheless it would be possible to prepare a separate systematic literature review for each of the highlighted concepts relating to OR.

## 6. Summary

The conducted study was driven by the necessity to academically position the concept of OR within other management contexts and conceptual frameworks. This work contributes to achieving this goal and serves as a valuable foundation for initiating further research, prompting specific inquiries into the connections between organizational resilience in the identified contexts. In conclusion, the OR is found as a complex and multifaced concept. While it is evident that ambidexterity, OLC, and other contexts such as shared leadership, agility, and collaboration play a crucial role in promoting resilience, there is also a necessity for clarity and consensus in defining organizational resilience for management contexts. The growing interest in research on organizational resilience is justified by the clear need of survival while managers face the reality of VUCA world. The concept of organizational resilience can be integrated with existing research on organizational theory by considering it as a multidimensional and heterogeneous phenomenon (Hepfer, Lawrence, 2022). By relation to resilience of physical objects, OR has potential to be widely used and understood not only by academics. In face of the conflicting viewpoints regarding the connection between OR and other concepts such as DCs, OLC, innovation and entrepreneurship necessitate additional research to establish a more unified comprehension. To sum up results, the study allows to reach its goal

by providing a synthesized perspective on the intricacies associated with organizational resilience.

In face of the review, further study is recommended to explore functional resilience, operational resilience, and strategic resilience. This classification implies avenues for further examination into the alignment of these dimensions with the overarching notion of OR (Hepfer, Lawrence, 2022). Considering the limited scope of this work further research is needed to place each management constructs within the OR theory dimensions to decide on their interdependencies.

Synthesizing the fragmented literature surrounding OR empowers researchers with a more nuanced understanding of the concept, facilitating the identification of future research possibilities. Other direction may be centered around the role of firm size and industry type in building its OR (Safari et al., 2023) or focused on the role of individuals, particularly managers, including the importance of emotional intelligence and ethical leadership (Zhao, Li, 2023). Overall, future research should aim to provide theoretical insights as well as practical solutions for building and maintaining organizations resilient.

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