

HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGIES AND ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE IN SELECTED PUBLICLY TRADED COMPANIES

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Aim: The paper examines whether, in the context of changes in terms of progress or regression within the analysed companies, appropriate actions are flexibly implemented in the dimension of human potential. This includes pursuing a human resources (HR) strategy aligned with the overall business strategy and ensuring consistency in various aspects, including recruitment, working time, training and incentive systems, which is one of the conditions for building organisational resilience within the company. In addition, it verifies whether strategic and operational measures are supported by an appropriate organisational culture, focused on embracing change.

Design, methodology and approach: Due to the relevance of the topic, this paper is a continuation of the research conducted by the author in the area of organisational functioning under conditions of change, in the context of building organisational resilience. The article is based on the results of research conducted by the article's author at two of the companies listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange and research on organisational resilience in the perspective of sustainable development conducted in 2024 by the Department of Enterprise Management at the University of Economics in Katowice. In the both cases, the research was based on analysing responses to questionnaires.

Findings: This article discusses the five obligatory conditions for building organisational resilience in the context of changes related to the company's potential in terms of progress or regression, which can result from an unstable, uncertain environment, focusing primarily on the area concerning the HR strategy.

Practical and social implications: It appears that an effective means, serving as a link for the entire organisation's operations and providing employees with a sense of stability while simultaneously facilitating the organisation's functioning in conditions of volatility, is the application of appropriate measures in the area of HR potential that are consistent with the progress or regression changes.

Originality/value: The study highlights the significance of flexibility of selected aspects of the HR strategy in building organisational resilience, a determinant, identified by the author as fourth in terms of relevance. Every change related to progress or regression requires appropriate actions in the area of human potential, namely an adequate HR strategy and consistent actions in terms of its various aspects, including recruitment, working time, training or the incentive system. The paper describes a case study of a selected publicly traded companies, focusing on selected aspects of the HR strategy, but also organisational culture.

Keywords: organisational resilience, volatility, overall human resources strategy, progress/regression dimension, joint-stock company.

Category of the paper: Viewpoint, General review, Case study.

1. Introduction

The aim of the paper is to highlight the importance of the HR strategy and its aspects in building organisational resilience in practical terms. It attempts to answer the question: “In practical terms, under the conditions of changes in the dimensions of progress and regression, are appropriate measures in the realm of human potential implemented flexibly in the examined company?”. These measures would primarily involve implementing an HR strategy appropriate to the overall business strategy and ensuring consistency in terms of its individual aspects, such as recruitment, working time, training or incentive system. The examples analysed concerns a selected joint-stock companies listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange. The concept of resilience is understood as the ability of an organisation to anticipate, prepare for and adapt to emerging changes and disruptions in order to survive and continue to develop (British Standard Institution, 2014). Building organisational resilience is a form of response (reaction) to changes, e.g. related to crisis (regression), but also to progress, which initiate a reorientation of the company's existing way of thinking and acting. As noted, an organisation's ability to build resilience can (and even should as the author of this paper observes) be developed through an HR management strategy (Douglas, 2021, p. 2). In many organisations, the HR strategy is increasingly becoming a core component of the overall organisational strategy. HR Management Information Systems are becoming a crucial element of organisational operations, while competency models support recruitment and employee development processes (Dziwulski, Skowron, 2019, p. 43). It was noted more than a decade ago that the HR strategy is an integral part of the organisation's strategy in many companies (Harasim, 2013, p. 26). Moreover, HR departments have become an integral segment of organisations (Harasim, 2013, p. 43).

An HR strategy that is appropriately ‘aligned’ with the overall business strategy can promote the building of organisational resilience. It is important to pay attention to the flexibility of selected aspects of this strategy in this context. Every change related to progress or regression requires appropriate actions in the area of human potential, namely an adequate HR strategy and consistent actions in terms of its various aspects, including recruitment, working time, training or the incentive system (Bujak, Puszko-Machowczyk, 2011, pp. 346-347).

2. Conditions and prerequisites for building organisational resilience

The literature on the subject describes various aspects that can affect resilience (Agostini, Nosella, 2022, pp. 1-14). Disruptive changes force organisations to develop their resilience in a volatile environment if they want to maintain their competitiveness. This paper attempts to answer the question: “How does intellectual capital (i.e. human capital, organisational capital and relational capital) help companies in responding to changing conditions and in seizing emerging opportunities?” Agostini and Nosella's research is one of the first attempts to clarify the relationship between organisational capital and SME resilience. An important factor in terms of building organisational resilience is an appropriate human resources strategy, adapted to changes in the company's potential in terms of progress or regression (but also in terms of other aspects, such as offensive/defensive or strategical/operational dimensions). This relationship also stems from the need to ensure coherence between the overall business strategy and the HR strategy (which is one of the functional strategies).

In order for companies to be able to build organisational resilience, certain basic conditions should be met. First of all, a necessary prerequisite for building organisational resilience is the existence of a specific relationship between the overall business strategy and the HR strategy. These two strategies are closely interlinked (as part of the so-called interactive approach). People are considered a key element in building competitive advantage within the organisation, rather than merely a 'tool' for implementing the organisation's strategy. There are also cases when the HR strategy is of primary importance in an organisation. People, in this case, are a strategic resource and a factor contributing to gaining competitive advantage and determining the direction for general strategic goals. This is referred to as an active approach (Janowska, 2002, p. 22; Ludwicyński, Stobińska, 2001, pp. 73-74).

Secondly, a necessary condition is ensuring consistency between the overall business strategy and functional strategies, including the HR strategy. Functional strategies are closely linked to the former. The literature on the subject, in addition to other distinguishing features such as key choices and simplicity, views consistency as one of the characteristics of a strategy. Consistency is analysed in two dimensions: internal and external. The former means that strategic conceptual choices complement each other and that specific choices are aligned with the company's strategy for action. The latter, on the other hand, means alignment with conditions in the external environment. Each choice and the way it is implemented must reinforce the effectiveness of the other choices and actions (Obłój, 2009, p. 6). Internal and external consistency is an indicative sign of a robust strategy, as part of which the company's critical decisions and actions need to complement and reinforce each other, generating positive feedback loops. Hence, the formulation of any functional strategy should be consistent with the overall business strategy (also referred to as the general or global strategy) of the company. For example, when setting company goals and determining how to achieve them,

the overarching objectives serve as the benchmark for defining financial and investment goals. The literature on the subject suggests that different types of strategy (including general strategy and functional strategy) overlap or complement each other (Rostowski, 2003, p. 9). Researchers recognise that there is a relationship between these strategies and “the relationship between personnel strategy and organisational strategy is inextricably linked” (Stalewski, Chlebicka, 1997, p. 31).

Thirdly, another factor influencing the development of organisational resilience in changing conditions (such as unexpected market challenges) is the consistency of partial strategies, including the HR strategy. Research results mentioned in the literature on the subject allow the formulation of specific guidelines concerning the nature of consistency (Malara, Kroik, 2017, p. 28).

The fourth determinant of building organisational resilience is functional flexibility, which refers to the ability to implement multidimensional changes (in terms of progress/regression, market potential, technical production, human resources, organisational, economic and financial aspects) in response to existing, occurring, or anticipated changes within both the organisation's external environment and its internal structure (Bujak, Puszko-Machowczyk, 2011, p. 146). In the dimension of HR management, areas that may be subject to development include recruitment, working time, training and the incentive system. Depending on the HR strategy pursued, these aspects also require consistent action. Achieving consistency, as noted, involves linking complementary actions related to the company's human resources, particularly in areas such as employee recruitment, development, remuneration and evaluation (Tyrańska, 2009, pp. 359-360). The literature also describes the distinguishing characteristics of companies that achieve market success. Among the traits that set successful companies apart from the competitors, it is flexibility that is most often highlighted (Majchrzak, 2020, p. 33).

The fifth condition for building organisational resilience has already been discussed earlier. It involves the essential support of strategic and operational activities through an organisational culture that is geared towards embracing change. This can be, for example, a supportive culture, whereby the organisation's management is oriented towards providing support to individuals and teams. In this case, there is a strong emphasis on shared values and achieving consensus in reaching goals. The basis for action is mutual trust. Employees are made aware that they are an asset to the organisation and are treated as human beings, not just as a resource. They have potential, which – when developed – contributes to better performance of the organisation. Additionally, one of the key roles of organisational culture, specifically its adaptive function, ensures order and a sense of certainty and stability for the organisation, even amidst sudden changes (Ciekanowski, Nowicka, 2014, p. 125).

3. Cultivating human potential in the context of building organisational resilience

Building resilience is closely dependent on having an adequate, comprehensive resource base. This applies to both the company's internal resources and those acquired through partnerships with other entities (Eriksson et al., 2022, p. 209). For larger companies, the proposed approach to aligning strategies with operational actions provides additional opportunities for penetrating and monitoring the effectiveness of HR management (Malara, Kroik, 2017, p. 32).

The above considerations are confirmed by the results of a survey of 211 publicly traded companies conducted in June/July 2024¹. 157 of the companies surveyed (74.76 %) strongly agreed with the statement that human resources in their organisation play a key role in enhancing resilience to unexpected market challenges, 53 (24.76 %) agreed with it, whereas only one company stated that it is difficult to say (0.48%) (cf. Table 1 and Figure 1). The responses to this question confirm the need to implement the aforementioned requirements (see first and second conditions in point 2).

Table 1.

Key role of human resources in increasing the resilience of the surveyed companies to unexpected market challenges

Human resources play a key role in enhancing resilience to unexpected market challenges in our organisation	number of respondents	%
a) strongly agree	157	74.76
b) agree	52	24.76
c) difficult to say	1	0.48
d) disagree	0	0.00
e) strongly disagree	0	0.00
Total	210	100.00

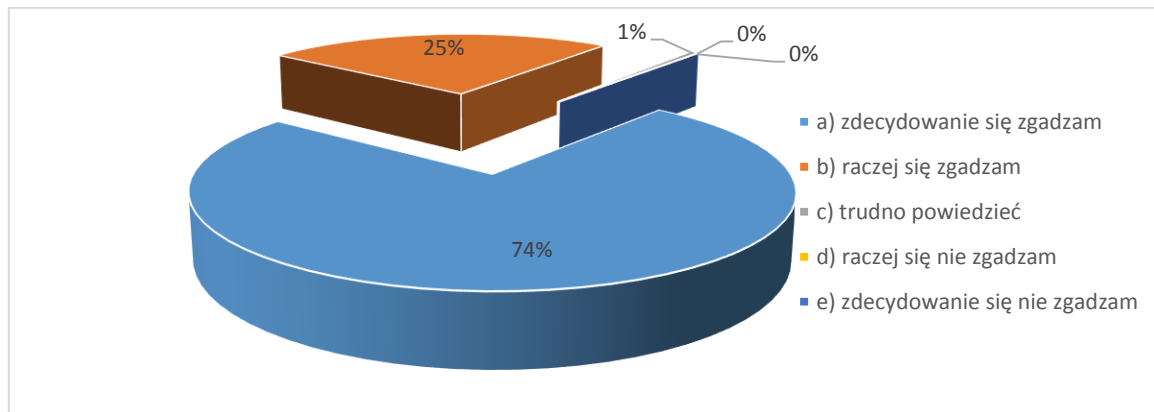
Department of Enterprise Management (2024). Organizational Resilience in the Perspective of Sustainable Development. Research task carried out by the Department of Enterprise Management. Survey Questionnaire. University of Economics in Katowice.

Center for Research and Development (2024). Organizational Resilience in the Perspective of Sustainable Development. Research task carried out by the Department of Enterprise Management. Survey Results. University of Economics in Katowice.

Research Task Manager: Dr. hab. Adam Samborski, Professor of UE Research Task Title: Organizational Resilience in the Perspective of Sustainable Development Years of Research Task Execution: 2023-2024 Unit Implementing the Research Task: Department of Enterprise Management, University of Economics in Katowice.

Source: own elaboration based on: Samborski, 2024.

¹ The study predominantly included large companies, but there were also some medium-sized and small enterprises.



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Figure 1. Key role of human resources in increasing the resilience of the surveyed companies to unexpected market challenges.

Source: Own elaboration based on: Resilience in the Perspective of Sustainable Development. Research task carried out by the Department of Enterprise Management, University of Economics in Katowice.

More than 92 companies (43.81%) surveyed strongly agreed that the organisational culture in their company effectively contributes to managing crises and enhances its resilience to challenges, with a somewhat larger number (97 companies, representing 46.19% of all the companies surveyed) responding that they agree to some extent with that statement. 21 respondents (10% of all the companies surveyed) neither agreed nor disagreed with it. The results shown in Table 2 and Figure 2 present the impact of organisational culture on enhancing the resilience of the companies surveyed. These results suggest the need to implement an appropriate organisational culture that is open to and supports changes from both the external environment and within the organisation itself (cf. fifth condition in point 2).

Table 2.

Effectiveness of organisational culture in managing crises and increasing resilience to challenges in the surveyed companies

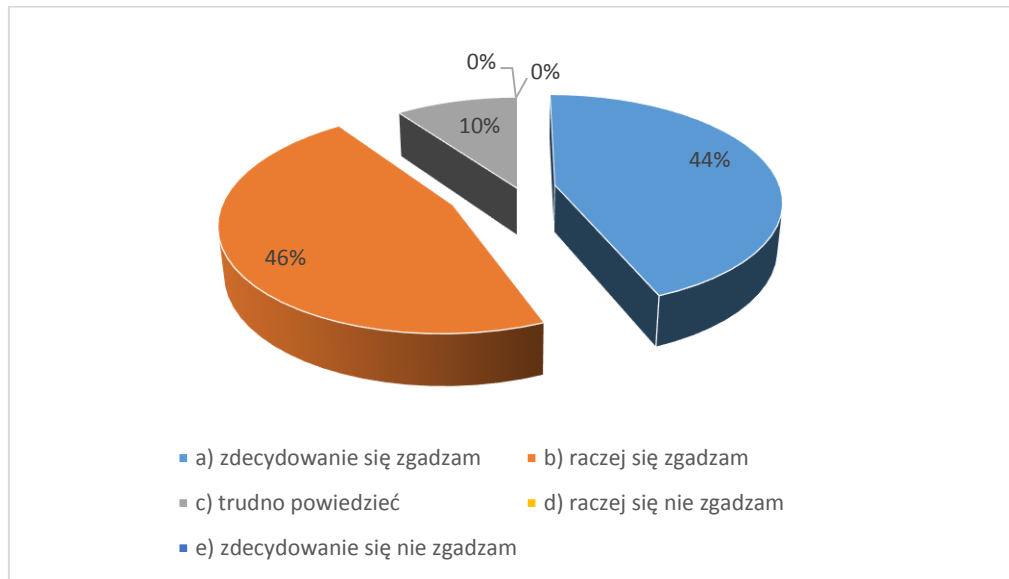
The organisational culture in our company effectively contributes to managing crises and increasing its resilience to challenges	number of respondents	%
a) strongly agree	92	43.81
b) agree	97	46.19
c) difficult to say	21	10.00
d) disagree	0	0.00
e) strongly disagree	0	0.00
Total	210	0.00

Department of Enterprise Management (2024). Organizational Resilience in the Perspective of Sustainable Development. Research task carried out by the Department of Enterprise Management. Survey Questionnaire. University of Economics in Katowice.

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Source: own elaboration based on: Resilience in the Perspective of Sustainable Development. Research task carried out by the Department of Enterprise Management, University of Economics in Katowice.



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Figure 2. Effectiveness of organisational culture in managing crises and increasing resilience to challenges in the surveyed companies.

Source: Own elaboration based on: Resilience in the Perspective of Sustainable Development. Research task carried out by the Department of Enterprise Management, University of Economics in Katowice.

89 (42.38%) of the surveyed companies strongly agreed that their organisation's flexibility and adaptability are directly affected by access to the right resources and competencies, with over 107 companies (50.95%) of the companies agreeing with that statement to some extent. 14 companies (more than 6.66%) neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement (cf. Table 3 and Figure 3). These results can be directly linked to the third and fourth conditions for building organisational resilience, which relate to the flexibility of functional strategies, including the HR strategy (cf. third and fourth conditions in point 2).

Table 3.

Access to adequate resources and competencies as a positive factor affecting the flexibility and adaptability of the surveyed companies

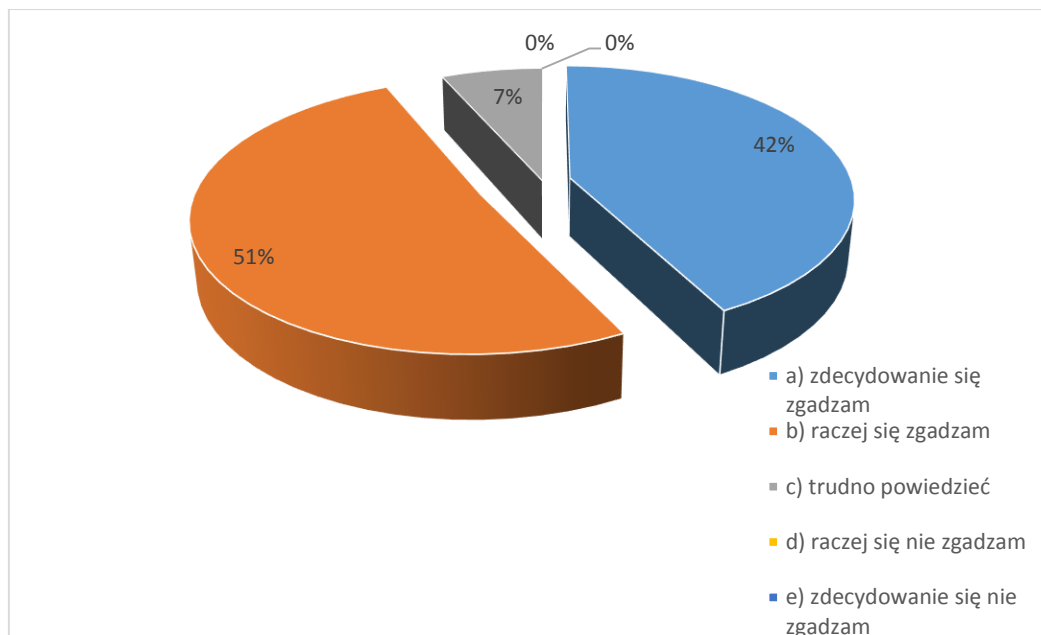
Our organisation's flexibility and adaptability are directly enhanced by access to the right resources and competencies	number of respondents	%
a) strongly agree	89	42.38095
b) agree	107	50.95238
c) difficult to say	14	6.666667
d) disagree	0	0
e) strongly disagree	0	0
Total	210	

Department of Enterprise Management (2024). Organizational Resilience in the Perspective of Sustainable Development. Research task carried out by the Department of Enterprise Management. Survey Questionnaire. University of Economics in Katowice.

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Source: own elaboration based on: Resilience in the Perspective of Sustainable Development. Research task carried out by the Department of Enterprise Management, University of Economics in Katowice.



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Figure 3. Access to adequate resources and competencies as a positive factor affecting the flexibility and adaptability of the surveyed companies.

Source: Own elaboration based on: Resilience in the Perspective of Sustainable Development. Research task carried out by the Department of Enterprise Management, University of Economics in Katowice.

When considering the fourth condition in the context of human potential, it is important to focus on such aspects as recruitment, working time, training and the incentive system. Depending on the HR strategy pursued, these aspects also require consistent action. Attention is also drawn to the role of personnel in shaping organisational resilience through effective recruitment processes and nurturing employee development, which leads to better retention parameters and strengthening employee commitment (higher motivation). One of the key tasks in HR management is attracting the right people to the organisation, as its operation heavily relies on the capabilities of its staff (Piotrowska-Trybull, Sirko, 2024, p. 4). From the perspective of the recruitment process, organisational resilience is demonstrated by the ability to secure a sufficient number of candidates with the specific qualities sought by the employer, who can effectively fulfil the organisation's mission and functions (Piotrowska-Trybull, Sirko, 2024, p. 18). On the other hand, reflecting on previous failures, providing employees with appropriate training on coping techniques and sufficient preparation for crises can lead to improved efficiency, better performance, adaptability, innovation and productivity. These factors, in turn, embody the essence of organisational effectiveness. They also emphasise that while there is extensive research on the relationship between learning in general and organisational effectiveness, studies specifically addressing learning from mistakes and failures, and their impact on future effectiveness, are scarce (Ingram, 2023, pp. 106-107).

The literature also highlights certain categories that serve as indicators of an organisation's focus on human capital. These include, for example, recruiting employees with potential and actively supporting their development, implementing incentive systems based on diverse criteria and motivators, and investing in employee growth (Dziwulski, Skowron, 2019, p. 37), which also increases the chances of retaining them in the organisation.

4. Organisational resilience in the context of market changes – the case studies

The first example cited relates to a joint-stock company that operates in the electromechanical industry specialising in the manufacture and distribution of industrial couplings, drilling equipment and small machinery and equipment for the mining industry². The company offers a wide range of products, including hydrokinetic – fluid, flexible and gear couplings, as well as drilling rigs, pumps and hydraulic power packs. The company supports a variety of industrial sectors such as mining, power generation, shipbuilding and machine

² The study was performed at two companies listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange in September and October 2024. To obtain the results of the study, a survey questionnaire was prepared which was completed in the first case by the company's Chief Commercial Officer and in the second case by the company's Development Director and sent by email to the author of the article.

industry. It is a manufacturer and distributor of equipment and tools mainly for the mining industry, with a particular focus on the underground mining sector. These are mainly couplings and drilling equipment. It also takes steps to meet the widest possible range of needs of the power generation industry in the field of couplings for all applications. In addition to the mining and power generation industries, the company's range of products is also aimed to a large extent at companies in the engineering, cement, steel and shipbuilding industries³.

With a comprehensive offer for customers operating in different industry sectors, the company aims to increase its share in non-mining markets. The study shows that the company implements a development strategy that is characterised by a constant increase in the quantitative and qualitative potential of the organisation. In addition, the company applies a personnel strategy that is one of the strategies most in line with the overall strategy, i.e. a mixed quantitative and qualitative strategy aimed at increasing the quality of employee competences. This strategy emphasises the numerical and qualitative alignment of the workforce to the needs of the organisation and the qualitative alignment of the workforce to the needs of the organisation (Lipka, 2007, p. 21).

In the company under the study, there is an increase in the level of employment in terms of progress and there is a need for employees with high quality competences. To this end, the company's managers decide to increase the number of substantive training courses for employees. In terms of progress, a so-called aggressive incentive system is implemented characterised by a high proportion of variable pay components and high salary differentiation. In contrast, no action is taking place in the area of working time systems.

Under the conditions of changes made to the company's potential in terms of decline, the company under study implements a personnel strategy that seeks to minimise the extent of the impact of the environment in order to maintain relative stability. This is known as a defensive strategy. In addition, measures to reduce working hours are introduced in a cost-cutting organisation. The number of substantive training courses for employees is declining, while the company is increasing funding for soft skill training. On the other hand, there are no changes in this case in the area of the remuneration system and the staff employment (cf. Table 4).

Table 4 attempts to juxtapose changes in the progress or regression dimension with the corresponding HR strategies in the first company.

³ The information was obtained from the website of the Company under the study.

Table 4.

Changes in the dimension of progress or regression and the corresponding HR strategies in the first company studied

Dimension of change	Changes in the dimension of progress	Changes in the regressive dimension
HR STRATEGIES	QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE STRATEGY	DEFENSIVE STRATEGY
Employment	increase in level of employment through recruitment	-
Working time	-	narrowing working time
Training:	an increase in funding so-called "hard" training, an increase in the number of training courses for employees	a decrease in the increase in financial expenditure on so-called "hard" training, a reduction in the number of such training courses, the dominance of so-called "soft" training courses
Incentive system	increased motivation through increased investment in motivation, increasing the number and types of motivators, aggressive incentive system	-

Source: own elaboration.

The second example examined concerns a listed company that is the largest in Central Europe and one of the largest in the world producing chains for the mining, fishing, power generation, sugar, cement and timber industries. It operates in all major global market segments. The company specialises in the manufacture of link chains for:

- mining – round and flat mining link chains, shearer loader and road header machine chains, suspension and transport chains, hoist chains, chain assemblies, clamps and flight bars;
- fisheries – trawl chains and others;
- power generation – wear resistant chains, hooks and chain assemblies;
- construction and transportation⁴.

The study shows that the Company implements a personnel strategy aimed at continuous growth, i.e. an offensive strategy. It refers to companies with dynamic growth requiring employees who are creative, innovative and ready to take risks, and therefore numerous candidates with the right skills and qualifications are recruited from the labour market (Tyrańska, 2009, p. 355). In the company under the study, there is an increase in the level of employment in terms of progress and there is a need for employees with high quality competences. To this end – as in the first example provided – decisions are taken to increase the number of substantive training courses for employees. In terms of progress, a so-called aggressive incentive system is implemented characterised by a high proportion of variable pay components and high wage differentiation. In contrast, no action is taking place in the area of the working time system.

⁴ The information was obtained from the website of the Company under the study.

Under the conditions of changes made to the company's potential in terms of decline, the company under study implements a personnel strategy that seeks to minimise the extent of the impact of the environment in order to maintain relative stability, i.e. a defensive strategy. In addition, measures are being introduced to narrow down the working hours, which are being reduced by shaping them accordingly. The number of substantive training courses for employees is decreasing, whereas, according to the reply, there are no changes in the area of the remuneration system and the staff employment (cf. Table 5).

Table 5 attempts to juxtapose changes in the progress or regression dimension with the corresponding HR strategies in the second company.

Table 5.

Changes in the dimension of progress or regression and the corresponding HR strategies in the second company studied

Dimension of change	Changes in the dimension of progress	Changes in the regressive dimension
HR STRATEGIES	OFFENSIVE STRATEGY	DEFENSIVE STRATEGY
Employment	increase in level of employment through recruitment, there is a growing requirement for individuals who possess advanced competencies and expertise.	-
Working time	-	narrowing working time by development of working time systems
Training:	an increase in funding so-called "hard" training, an increase in the number of training courses for employees	a decrease in the increase in financial expenditure on so-called "hard" training, a reduction in the number of such training courses,
Incentive system	an incentive system is introduced which is characterised by a high proportion of mobile remuneration and a large pay differential.	-

Source: own elaboration.

5. Summary

The results of this paper suggest that in order for companies to build organisational resilience amid changes in their potential, whether through progress or regression, certain conditions must be met, including:

1. The existence of an interactive or active relationship between the overall business strategy and the HR strategy, meaning that these strategies evolve together, often with the HR strategy taking a leading role due to employees being a key strategic asset.
2. The implementation of consistent functional strategies, including both HR and overall business strategies.
3. Consistency of the HR strategy itself (i.e. internal consistency).

4. Flexibility of individual elements of the HR strategy, including recruitment, working time, training and the incentive system, in response to changes in the company's potential, whether through progress or regression.
5. Support of strategic and operational activities through an organisational culture that is geared towards embracing change, for example a supportive culture.

Research conducted in 2024 by the Department of Enterprise Management at the University of Economics in Katowice supports the conclusions drawn in the summary. It appears that individuals involved directly or indirectly in crisis management within the surveyed companies are aware of the necessity to build organisational resilience. All the companies surveyed strongly agree or agree to some extent that human resources in their organisation play a key role in enhancing resilience to unexpected market challenges. Furthermore, it appears that organisational culture also contributes effectively to managing crises and enhances the organisation's resilience to external challenges.

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