

Multilevel Framework for Enhancing Organisational Resilience

As a dynamic process that arises at multiple levels (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003; Williams, Gruber, Sutcliffe, Shepherd & Zhao, 2017), organisational resilience can be enhanced over time by adjusting and strengthening organisational capabilities. Therefore, in order to build and enhance organisational resilience, management efforts need to be adjusted and maintained at multiple levels.

To understand how organisations can better respond to crises in the increasingly complex world, we used multilevel and continuous approaches to design a resilience framework to help organisations to assess their crisis preparedness and response capacity, and learn to enhance resilience (Tasic, Amir, Tan & Khader, 2019). Using the multilevel approach, we comprehensively described and analysed key factors that shape organisational crisis preparedness and responses, and developed learning mechanisms to enhance organisational resilience.

Due to the dynamic nature of organisational processes, including enhancing resilience, a continuous approach is well-suited in developing the framework. The framework focuses on the individual, organisational and environmental levels to show how resilience can be enhanced in four phases:

1. Reviewing and monitoring context
2. Testing preparedness
3. Analysing and assessing response
4. Strengthening capabilities

A multilevel analysis aids in identifying areas for improvement on each level to comprehensively increase organisational capabilities to cope with crises and thus, enhance organisational resilience (figure 1)

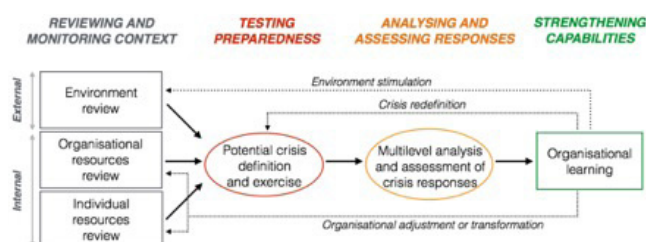


Figure 1: Multilevel framework for enhancing organisational resilience.

Analysis: The biggest challenge in resilience studies is testing organisational capacities in the absence of a crisis. Thus, the framework is applied to a simulated crisis to show how an organisation can enhance its resilience in practice. We conducted empirical research with a research and training entity in the security services sector in Southeast Asia.

Data was collected through observation, interviews, questionnaires and document review at each level. Senior staff were interviewed on work culture, safety procedures, and stakeholders relationship. Questionnaires provided a quantitative overview of resources on the individual and organisational levels. Based on a simulated terrorist attack and simulated loss of confidential information, questionnaires revealed the organisation's response, which is assessed against crisis response protocols.

Conclusion:

- Crisis management efforts should be at the individual, organisational, and environmental levels
- Organisational resilience can be enhanced through the four phases of the framework.
- Learning at multiple levels (e.g. organisational adjustment/transformation, crisis redefinition, environment stimulation) could increase organisational capabilities.
- Practising responses and drawing lessons can expand the cognitive, behavioural, emotional, relational, and socio-material perspectives of an organisation and strengthen its ability to respond to actual crisis
- A continuous approach is required due to the dynamics of organisational processes. This allows internal and external changes to be better monitored (e.g. detecting weak signals and environmental pressures) and assess if previously designed lessons were effective.

Research team:

Justyna Tasic, Sulfikar Amir, Jethro Tan, Majeed Khader

References:

- Sutcliffe, K. M., & Vogus, T. J. (2003). Organizing for resilience. Positive organizational scholarship, 94-110.
- Tasic, J., Amir, S., Tan, J., & Khader, M. (2019). A multilevel framework to enhance organizational resilience. Journal of Risk Research, 1-20.
- Williams, T. A., Gruber, D. A., Sutcliffe, K. M., Shepherd, D. A., & Zhao, E. Y. (2017). Organizational response to adversity: Fusing crisis management and resilience research streams. Academy of Management Annals, 11(2), 733-769.