

# ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE WHILE FACING CONDITIONS OF UNCERTAINTY: FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC TO OTHER CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

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## Abstract

Because of uncertainties, which are influenced by major external events, such as pandemics, emergence of wars and other phenomena those keep testing organizational abilities to survive and thrive. This article aims to review the existing research on organizational resilience especially in the face of global COVID-19 pandemic – in particular, which factors constitute a successful resilience model. Three branches of organizational resilience were defined and analyzed as follows: knowledge base, resource availability, and social resources & power. Theoretical and empirical research results create a basis for further research in order to analyze the phenomenon of organizational resilience in a broader sense, by adapting a complex approach and covering different sectors.

KEY WORDS: organizational resilience; organizational resilience factors; COVID-19 pandemic, resilience model

## Anotacija

Neapibrėžtumas, kurį lemia sparčiai besikeičianti aplinka ir jos reiškiniai, tokie kaip pandemija, karo protrūkiai ir kiti įvykiai, nuolat tikrina organizacijų gebėjimą išlikti ir klestėti. Šiame straipsnyje siekiama apžvelgti jau atliktus tyrimus organizacinio atsparumo tematika, didžiausią dėmesį skiriant COVID-19 epidemijos situacijai, ir nustatyti organizacinius sėkmingo atsparumo modelio veiksnus. Apibrėžtos ir išanalizuotos trys organizacinio atsparumo sritys: žinių bazė, išteklių prieinamumas ir socialiniai ištekliai bei lyderystė. Šio tyrimo teoriniai ir empiriniai rezultatai sudaro tolesnių tyrimų pagrindą, organizacinio atsparumo reiškinį analizuojant kompleksiskai – apimant įvairius sektorius.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: organizacinis atsparumas, organizacinio atsparumo veiksniai, COVID-19 pandemija, atsparumo modelis.

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## Introduction

Various major external perturbations may have a significant negative impact on organisational development. One of the most famous examples of such a perturbation was the Covid-19 pandemic, which profoundly affected the operational processes of organisations, regardless of the sector (Cheema-Fox et al., 2020, in Huang et al., 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic is not the only phenomenon which caused many challenges and caused changes to an organisational response in the

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face of digitalisation, social restrictions, and other major transformations. The contemporary world also faces other disturbances, including wars, such as the wars in Ukraine and Palestine. Scholars agree that the uncertainties regarding the unstable geopolitical and national security environment, and other spheres, exist in the context of globalisation, which is affecting the world's 'economic, social and political dimensions' (Fang & Nolt, 2022, 2166); thus, nowadays different organisations must operate in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment (VUCA). Complex uncertainties have a tendency to cause a chain reaction effect, thus influencing the emergence of other types of uncertainty, including worldwide financial crises (Van Woerkum, Aarts & Van Herzele, 2011; Bannigidamath & Indawan, 2024).

Thus, the need to operate in the unstable global pandemic environment has fostered discussions about the preparedness of organisations to face such conditions of uncertainty. As a result, attention to the concept of resilience and its attributes became high in demand as a research topic. Even though there is still no unified definition of what organisational resilience is, scholars agree that it is constituted of three main aspects: an organisation's capacity to assess, accept, and adapt to adversity (Vera et al., 2021).

It has been noticed that even though efforts to conceptualise the definition of organisational resilience and present the characteristics of it have been increasing from the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic until recently (Huang et al., 2020), there is still scope for research to better understand the factors that helped organisations to assess, accept and adapt to adversity. This calls for scientific research which aims to reveal the factors of resilience that are the most important to an organisation in the face of conditions of uncertainty. Consequently, the research question is formulated as follows: Which elements of organisational resilience, according to current academic research, seem to be most crucial during a period of uncertainty?

This article is structured in three parts. The first part is devoted to a theoretical analysis of scientific literature: factors of organisational resilience. The second part of the paper describes the methodology on which the research will be conducted. The third part presents the empirical research results and a discussion.

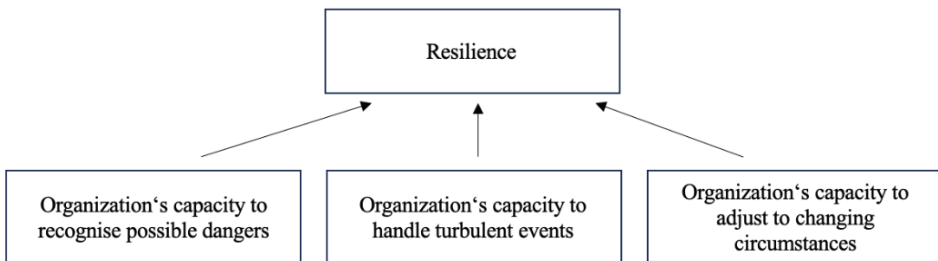
## **1. Organisational resilience factors: a theoretical framework**

Organisational resilience can be described as 'intrinsically oriented organisational systems that rebound to maintain or regain a "dynamically stable state" that enables operations to continue during major upheavals or stressful crises' (Roach & Brown-Williams, 2024, 28). It is argued that resilience comes with more than

surviving and returning to normal organisational conditions under conditions of uncertainty; it involves ‘identifying potential risks and taking proactive steps to ensure that an organisation thrives in the face of adversity’ (Sommers, 2009, 13, cited in Duchek, 2020, 220). Because of this, organisational resilience needs to be considered not only a ‘static attribute’, but also a latent, path-dependent collection of skills that organisations acquire while handling unforeseen circumstances, which forms an organisation’s competitive advantage as well (Duchek, 2020, 220; Paluszak et al., 2021).

Moreover, Santos and Spers (2023) explain that organisational resilience differs from other attributes of the organisation (such as ‘flexibility, agility, and adaptability’) because resilience is evaluated when an ‘unexpected’ event occurs (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011, cited in Santos & Spers, 2023, 4). Finally, a conclusion of all the above-mentioned definitions is presented by Duchek (2020) in Fig. 1. After overviewing earlier concepts of organisational resilience, the author argues that three main aspects are important to mention when considering resilience: an organisation’s ability to evaluate external events and their effect on the organisation; an institution’s ability to handle adversity; and an organisation’s potential for adapting to changes.

Functioning in a highly uncertain and ever-changing environment calls for an effective model of organisational resilience. For instance, research conducted by Butkus et al. describes three steps in building organisational resilience: ‘planning, adaptation, and enhanced learning’ (2023, 36). The planning step incorporates preparing for possible critical situations that can critically affect the functioning of the organisation; incorporating this step prepares the organisation to counter external shocks better (Butkus et al., 2023). The second step includes already facing the challenge and coping with it; and the third and last step is for reflecting on lessons



*Figure 1.* The definition of organisational resilience (prepared by the author, according to Duchek, 2020)

learned from the process and keeping best practices (Butkus et al., 2024). According to the research conducted by this author, organisations must pay attention to all three steps equally, even though ‘organisations tend to prioritise specific stages based on their strategies’ (Butkus et al., 2023, 51).

Another model, developed by Roach and Brown-Williams (2024), presents the ‘Triple A’ model of organisational resilience processes: the first step is ‘assessing the crisis’ (evaluating the external environment and the associated risks); the second step is ‘accepting the crisis’ (evaluating the effect that the external crisis has on the organisation, and preparing employees for the inevitability of change and new strategies needed to manage the risks); and the last and third step is ‘adapting to the crisis’ (adjusting to changes in the environment, evaluating new behaviours and competencies developed’ (p. 30). This model puts its focus on external shocks, and how the organisation should aim to manage them.

Lastly, a study by Duchek (2020) conceptualises organisational resistance from the processual approach (see Fig. 2).

As is shown in Fig. 2, organisational resilience consists of three main parts: anticipation, coping and adaptation. Anticipation includes the capacity to monitor the internal and external environments, to recognise potential threats, and to be ready for adverse situations. The anticipation stage is composed of aspects, such

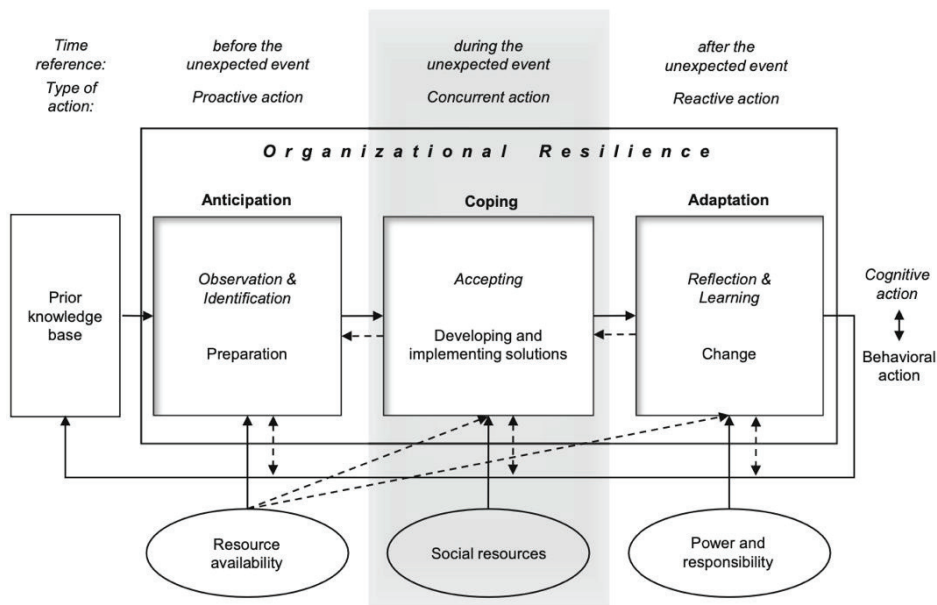


Figure 2. The organisational resilience process (Duchek, 2020)

as ‘observation’ and ‘identification’ (p. 225). According to Ducheck, an organisation’s attention and resources at this stage must be highly concentrated on ‘potentially threatening developments’, ‘potential future developments’, and ‘preparation capabilities’ (p. 226). This can be achieved by performing activities in ‘training and simulation’ (p. 227). Even if it is not possible to foresee adverse events, organisations can take action to ‘build a resilience potential’ and the basis for a successful reaction to urgent circumstances (p. 227).

The coping stage is a central aspect of Ducheck’s resilience model. At this stage, an organisation is already facing adversity, so the coping stage is concerned with the ability to acknowledge an issue and possess the capacity to create and carry out ways to deal with these situations. During this time, the capacity to acknowledge a problem, find out ways of overcoming it, react quickly, and be able to admit mistakes, are crucially important. The author argues the importance of first accepting the fact that an organisation is facing change. This will help the organisation come up with a strategy on how to overcome this situation.

Finally, the adaptation stage of organisational resilience is devoted to preventing or lessening the negative effects of unforeseen circumstances. All these attributes contribute to ‘organisational advancement’ (Limnios et al., cited in Ducheck, 2020, 230). The ‘reflection and learning’ aspect, mentioned in the model (see Fig. 2), explains that success or failure situations can be analysed both from internal (the institution’s) and external (another organisation’s) sources. Learning and reflecting on how the organisation coped with adversity also leads to change in the organisation: how well it is implemented to avoid similar failures when facing change in the future. A lot of success depends on resistance to change in the organisation, which has already been described in the previous section.

A conceptual framework of organisational resilience is presented based on an analysis of scientific literature on organisational resilience (see Fig. 3).

The process of organisational resilience (preparing for adversity, facing adversity, learning after experiencing adversity) is influenced by three factors as follows: knowledge base, resource availability, and social resources and power relations.

The *knowledge base* is explained through capabilities regarding the search for knowledge and its usage for preparation to face adversity due to conditions of uncertainty. The literature argues that analysing, learning and reflecting on them helps better prepare business strategies, and thus foster organisational change, as well as a preparedness for possible disruption (Melián-Alzola, Monroy & Hidalgo-Peñate, 2020). A learning-oriented organisational culture is perceived as one of the positive organisational aspects. Training and reflection on past experiences (either successes or failures) give a strong background for organisational resilience (Santos & Spers, 2023). The active use of knowledge is another important step that is

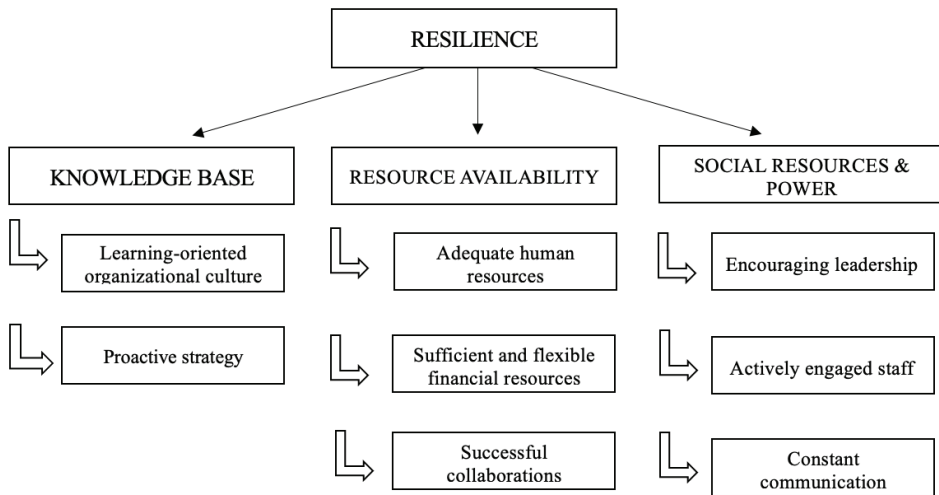


Figure 3. Factors of organisational resilience (prepared by the authors, according to Teo, Lim & Lee, 2017; Duchek, 2020; Nyaupane et al., 2020; Santos & Spers, 2023; Butkus et al., 2024)

needed in a resilient organisation. This means that knowledge is not only accumulated, but also shared between roles (Santos & Spers, 2023). Thus, a resilient organisation encourages staff members to have access to a variety of forms and places for the storage of organisation-critical information, as well as expert opinions on demand. The team is instructed to share roles and ensure that someone is always ready to undertake essential tasks. Having a constantly developed knowledge base leads to a more positive attitude towards change, and better preparation to face adverse situations.

The *availability of resources* is another important aspect influencing organisational resilience under conditions of uncertainty. As is described in the research by Santos and Spers (2023), another aspect of organisational resilience is the ability to provide additional capacity in terms of human, financial and other resources in times when an organisation faces adversity. When facing resistance in the organisation, the leadership should consider the fact that employees and human capital are the main contributors to building the organisation’s resilience. Thus, their preparedness and ability to face change are a crucial part of building organisational resilience (Nyaupane et al., 2020). Sufficient human resources help to come up with creative solutions when facing challenges, whereas the flexible flow of financial resources contributes to the implementation of those ideas. Moreover, effective partnerships are outlined as another tool that can enhance an organisation’s infor-

mal resources (Santos & Spers, 2023), as they open up possibilities for cooperation and access to resource sharing in times of adversity.

Lastly, *social resources and power* include behavioural and cognitive aspects, such as encouraging leadership, actively engaged staff and constant communication. Leadership serves as the aspect with the most importance when determining whether an organisation is resilient or not. The leaders of the organisation become actors of change in the organisation. Their role includes aspects such as ‘facilitating adaptation and resource sharing for organisational recovery’, ‘gathering different perspectives for collective meaning-making and sense making’, and ‘communicating mindfully, activating positive emotions in the connections between members’ (Teo et al., 2017, 140).

Scholars agree that leadership plays a crucial role in determining how resilient an organisation is in the context of a disruption such as Covid-19. For instance, in the research by Lombardi et al., leadership is metaphorically referred to as gardening, and the head of the garden, the gardener, must take full responsibility for the garden’s ‘flowers’ (the employees), and nurture them, so that all together they make the garden flourish. The authors explain that this metaphor helps to see the role of a leader in times when an organisation is facing a crisis, and the need to create a safe and supporting environment for the emotional stability of employees (2021). Research suggests that this can be done after observing the ‘unique environment’ which surrounds the organisation, and adjusting the leadership measures according to that (Lombardi et al., 2021, 9). Other research conducted by Dohaney et al. also addresses the topic of the leadership’s support and its positive effect on building the resilience of an organisation (2020). This research echoes the findings of Lombardi et al., explaining the need for nurturing a connection between employees of the organisation, since the lack of it is often a limiting factor when strengthening the resilience capabilities in an organisation (Dohaney et al., 2020).

Scientists argue that leaders of an organisation must ‘utilise social relationships to activate resilience in a crisis’ (Teo et al., 2017, 140). The research emphasises the importance of empathy during times of external disturbance, and how this attribute helps leaders of organisations understand the employees together and create relations between them. Constant communication is another important element, as a lack of it is known to foster resistance, which in turn reduces the organisational ability to face unforeseen and unplanned events. Efficient communication is also useful for engaging staff, which helps employees of the organisation take the initiative and apply their knowledge to address certain issues that the organisation is facing (Santos & Spers, 2023).

It has been noted that collaborating with both internal and external social capital is another important factor characterising organisational resilience. The results

of research by Melian-Alzola et al. (2020) suggest that organisations need to create partnerships with various types of stakeholders to thrive in an uncertain environment.

This theoretical framework was used for the empirical research, whose methodology and results are presented in the following parts of the article.

## 2. Methodology

In order to empirically define and evaluate factors of organisational resilience under conditions of uncertainty, empirical research was performed by choosing the case of a Lithuanian organisation which provides various educational services and thus was very affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, changes in education law, and the war in Ukraine. The following tasks were formulated regarding the empirical research: to find out how the respondents understand the main concepts of the research; how respondents evaluate the implementation of certain aspects of resilience in their organisation under conditions of uncertainty; and what their opinion is of the overall resilience level in their organisation when it faces disturbing events.

**Research method.** The qualitative research method was selected. Qualitative research can be defined as a method which depends on applying context-specific analysis and interpretation to social experiences and notions (Bozkurt & Öztürk, 2022). It allows the research participants to express more freely their opinions and ideas, and thus to get a much more complex perspective.

**Research sample.** To recruit participants for the interviews, the purposive sample method was used. For this research, two groups of respondents were asked to participate in individual interviews: administration and employees. To ensure that the selected group of respondents would represent the organisation's staff, the following criteria were established:

- a) The research respondent must have worked in the organisation for no less than three years.
- b) The respondents represent other members of the organisation's staff.
- c) The respondents were introduced to the research and agreed to participate in the interview.

Four members of the administration were selected to be interviewed. The chosen research participants met the above-mentioned selection criteria regarding working years and the representation of other colleagues, as well as agreeing to participate in the interview. All of them are accountable for different areas, including the overall management of the administration team as well as of the entire institution. Thus, this group of research participants can provide a comprehensive approach about the challenges they face, as well as resilience factors.



The second group of research participants were four employees who have dealt with and keep dealing with emerging challenges face to face, and accordingly play a crucial role in fostering organisational resilience.

Research instrument. To complete the research and analysis of the situation of resilience, and how certain aspects of it are implemented in the chosen institution, an interview questionnaire with 12 questions was prepared. Based on the conceptual framework presented in Fig. 3, the research participants were asked the following questions:

- How would you define the concept of conditions of uncertainty?
- How would you define the concept of organisational resilience?
- How often do you think your organisation faces situations of uncertainty?
- How would you describe your organisation's stance towards unexpected change?
- How would you describe the organisational attitude towards learning as a preparation for adverse situations in your work?
- What is your opinion of the importance of adequate human resources for organisational resilience under conditions of uncertainty?
- What is your opinion of your institution's efficiency and distribution of financial flows in times of situations of uncertainty?
- How would you describe the leadership role that the administration plays in times of uncertainty?
- What do you think of the partnerships that your institution has? Could you give examples of when partnerships contributed to the resilience of the organisation in conditions of uncertainty?
- How engaged do you think the staff are when the organisation is preparing for, facing, and recovering from adversity?
- What is your opinion of the level of communication at your work during situations when the organisation is facing adverse situations?
- What is your opinion of the level of resilience under conditions of uncertainty at the school you are working at? What would you suggest improving?

All the research participants were presented with the same interview questions, because the goal of the research was to compare responses on the same topics between these two groups of research participants, and asking different questions would not allow us to compare research participants' opinions as was planned by the researcher.

Methods of data analysis. Since a semi-structured interview was selected for the collection of data for this research, the whole process of finding a suitable time and place, and other related matters needed to be planned. The head of the

organisation was contacted via email with a request to conduct interviews with members of the administration and employees. All the interviews were conducted the same day, face to face. It allowed the researcher to establish a more convenient environment for the research participant, communicate more openly, and better monitor research participants' facial and body language during the process of the interview, which allowed the researcher to collect rich and authentic data. The average duration of an interview was 25 minutes. All the interviews were recorded with the verbal consent of the research participant, so that all the answers were saved; after the interviews, they were transcribed. This was done for the purpose of being able to conduct a *content analysis*. This method allows the researcher to systematically analyse the given information by finding recurring themes and patterns in significant amounts of textual data (Bengtsson, 2016).

Ethics of the research. Several aspects were considered to ensure ethics in this research. One of them was getting consent to participate in the interviews from each research participant after they were introduced to the aim of the research and information about where the collected data would be used. The research participants were also told that they were free not to answer any question if they did not want to, or to withdraw from the interview at any time. More than this, since the research participants were asked for their subjective opinion, interviews were held individually, with each of them face-to-face, to ensure that they were free to express their thoughts on various aspects of their organisation while retaining confidentiality. Their anonymity was kept by coding their identities. All the answers were coded without mentioning any names or other information that would help recognise the research participants: the representatives of the administration were coded from A1 to A4, and the employees from E1 to E4.

### 3. Results

Concept of conditions of uncertainty. When describing how the staff of the institution described the concept of conditions of uncertainty, three main response groups which emerged need to be mentioned. When thinking about this concept, members of the administration and employees described it by using different characteristics. For instance, research participant **A1** referred to an unusual environment which characterises conditions of uncertainty. Respondents **A2**, **E4**, **A4** and **A3** explained that such circumstances arise due to changes in the external environment which affects the functioning of the school. Moreover, the answers of some research participants, for instance, **E1** and **E2**, described 'undefined situations' (see Table 1).

Table 1. Level of understanding: the concept of organisational resilience (prepared by the authors)

| Category                             | Subcategory                                  | Quotes from the research participants  |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Concept of organisational resilience | Set of certain decisions to remain operating | '[...] organisations' capacity to remain operating during times of crisis or challenges in the external environment' <b>(A2)</b><br>'[...] a plan which would outline the course of action when an organisation is facing a crisis situation' <b>(E2)</b><br>'[...] a set of rules that would guide the functioning of organisations under conditions of uncertainty' <b>(E4)</b>  |
|                                      | Leadership                                   | 'I would refer to the openness to tell the community that today we have a situation that is not clear to me as a leader and admit that I do not have the answers to all the questions myself, and so I gather the community and invite them to solve this uncertainty together' <b>(A3)</b><br>'[...] resilience means that no matter what may happen today, you will have to learn to manoeuvre and make others less stressed; some things you can control, some things you can't even imagine' <b>(A4)</b><br>'[...] it relates to the way leadership and effective communication build a strong base to face the chaos from the external environment' <b>(E1)</b> |
|                                      | Change in operations and activities          | '[...] the period during which the organisation is able to strengthen all processes when faced with uncertain circumstances, so that it helps in confrontations with those conditions for the institution to operate and achieve the goals set' <b>(A1)</b><br>'[...] organisations' ability to quickly reorient and make effective decisions in order to fulfil a certain goal or task set' <b>(E3)</b>   |

Concept of organisational resilience. Once the concept of conditions of uncertainty had been defined, the research participants were asked how they would describe organisational resilience in such a context. After reading the answers to this question, three subcategories were outlined. The research participants understood resilience as an organisation's ability to make decisions, and, when in need, to change certain specifics of the way the organisation functions (**A1, E3**) to face unexpected events (**A2, E2, E4**).

When asked about the frequency of their institution being exposed to conditions of uncertainty, the answers varied in two main ways. It can be observed that while the majority of the employees explained the frequency of disruptive events in numerical form (for instance, every year and a half, as research participant **A3** mentioned), most of the administration said that they were exposed to changes in the external environment every day. This suggests that often external shocks

and changes in external environment are mainly observed and managed by the administration; if the external and unexpected change does not significantly affect the work of employees, then the administration tends to keep the information and processes to themselves (see Table 2).

Table 2. Level of understanding: the frequency of facing uncertainty conditions (prepared by the authors, 2024)

| Category                                      | Subcategory                           | Quotes from the research participants  |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| Frequency of facing conditions of uncertainty | Constant exposure to external changes | <p>‘Our organisation inevitably faces all those external circumstances, as I mentioned, like Covid-19, when there was a need to transfer learning and activities to remote spaces, so those external circumstances did not bypass any institutions, including us’ (A1)</p> <p>(A2)</p> <p>‘[...] once a year we always face some kind of major unforeseen event; overall, we are used to operating in uncertain conditions, as a lot of things may change overnight, which changes your work schedule and everything that you have been planning up to that date’ (A4)</p> <p>‘[...] during recent years I would say that we have constantly been functioning under conditions of uncertainty as an organisation, whether it relates to uncertainty of the political or the epidemiological situation’ (E3)</p>  |
|   | Every year                            | <p>‘[...] since all such disturbances are sudden and unexpected, it’s a bit difficult to say the frequency, but I would think that events happen every year and a half, for instance, the pandemic, the war in Ukraine’ (A3)</p> <p>‘[...] such disturbances probably tend to occur every year in different spheres, whether it is war or a health crisis’ (E1)</p> <p>‘[...] it seems that after the occurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the frequency of such major events happening to our school started to get more often: after it, the war in Ukraine began, and we started teaching Ukrainian refugees, and now we ourselves live in this uncertainty about war in Lithuania’ (E2)</p> <p>‘[...] our school is exposed to every global disturbance that the world faces, so the aforementioned pandemics, the shifting geopolitical situation: we have to keep operating throughout those external shocks’ (E4)</p> |

Table 3. Knowledge base: proactive posture (prepared by the author, 2024)

| Category          | Subcategory          | Quotes from the research participants   |
|-------------------|----------------------|---|
| Proactive posture | Experience           | <p>‘[...] our organisation by its nature already has a trained a capacity for dealing with such conditions; because of our experience, we do not let ourselves panic, and we know what to do in such situations’ (A1)</p> <p>‘[...] our organisation is quite resilient in that respect, because we already have experience of dealing with such situations, so I am confident that we are ready to face any types of challenge that might come up’ (A2)</p> <p>‘[...] it really depends on the leader of the organisation. In our case, throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, we worked despite the working hours. We worked together so well that we even gave advice to other schools. I think we manage uncertainties quite well due to our experience’ (E4)</p> <p>‘[...] uncertain conditions are part of our organisation now, we view unexpected change as a normal thing which we are used to experiencing often’ (A4)</p> |
|                   | Psychological stance | <p>‘[...] our staff look at challenges in a calm way, because we know that, either way, they will be solved collectively, even while being under great stress and levels of uncertainty’ (A3)</p> <p>‘[...] our school reacted calmly to unexpected change, such as the Covid-19 pandemic because of the very clear, well-arranged and well-thought-out decisions of the administration’ (E3)</p>   |
|                   | Level of clarity     | <p>‘[...] in the event of disturbances, our administration effectively communicates such situations, we would get information within several hours’ (E1)</p> <p>‘[...] the school’s administration really tries to be as direct with the remaining staff as possible in such events, but quite often more direction is missing from the upper levels, having in mind the Ministry of Education, which sometimes forces the administration to communicate vague information, and which, in turn, creates resistance to change from the employees’ (E2)</p>   |

When discussing how the institution reacts overall to external challenges, both the administration and the employees made several points. First, the experience factor stood out in all responses. This organisation has been working for ten years, and half the respondents argued that they look at challenges confidently due to their past experience, from which they learned (A1, A2, E4, A4). Moreover, both employees and the administration (A3, E3) argued that their organisation did not panic when faced with situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic or the integration of Ukrainian refugees. This can be linked to the fact that the research participants believed they already had experience in this situation, which makes facing new

challenges psychologically easier. Lastly, the employees emphasised that in times of disruption, the administration shows a sufficient level of clear communication, therefore outlining that this aspect is another important part of resilience, besides the above-mentioned leadership aspect.

*Table 4.* Knowledge base: a learning-oriented organisational culture (prepared by the authors)

| Category                                 | Subcategory                           | Quotes from the research participants   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| Learning-oriented organisational culture | Mandatory training                    | <p>‘Learning comes from two sources: planned learning (civil, mobilisation training), and learning from experience. The latter was shown to be more effective, as it showed the areas of improvement for us as the administration’ <b>(A1)</b></p> <p>‘[...] so far it does not seem to be the priority in our organisation. We do have formal mandatory training for civil and fire security; however, they are held mostly online, and their effectiveness is a bit questionable’ <b>(E1)</b></p> <p>‘[...] we conduct mandatory training, such as emergency medical aid, civil security and fire drill. However, we do not really have any learning about what would be done in the event of a crisis. Of course, we talk together about how we would act in such a situation, but it is not formal training’ <b>(A4)</b></p> <p>‘We try to follow all the changes and conduct necessary training (fire drill), and non-mandatory (civil security) for the staff all the time’ <b>(A2)</b></p> |
|  | Encouragement from the administration | <p>‘[...] we primarily send staff for training conducted by other organisations. Recently, most staff registered for training specifically about change and crisis management; however, we had to withdraw from it, as the content of the training was not what we expected content-wise’ <b>(A3)</b></p> <p>‘[...] our administration supports us financially going for training, and in any other way; however, I would say that it is not about the attitude, but the availability of such training, there is a lack of it’ <b>(E2)</b></p> <p>‘The administration creates the opportunities and encourages participation in training and conferences, we just need to find them’ <b>(E3)</b></p>  |
|  | Motivation of employees to learn      | <p>‘We try to participate as much as possible, since we need to stay up to date with all the changes; however, I have not heard about training about crisis and change management’ <b>(E4)</b></p>  |

Another important aspect for resilience is how much the organisation prioritises and builds the learning environment. The thoughts of respondents revealed that an organisation mostly learns, and in this way prepares for conditions of uncertainty through formal and informal learning. The opinion of staff on both ways of learning has shown that formal training (civil security, fire drill training) is less effective and useful than informal learning (past experiences of facing unplanned change). Most of the mandatory training is conducted in a virtual format, which made the research participants question the staff's preparation for acting in situations of sudden change or crisis (**E1, A4**). However, most respondents mentioned that even though both the administration and the employees are eager to participate in training, there is little or none of it (**E2, E3, E4**).

The research participants agreed that without strong personnel it is extremely challenging to face unplanned challenges, so teamwork is a determinant of a public sector organisation's resilience (**A1, E4**). However, one research participant (**E2**) stated that there was no dedicated group for managing crisis or unplanned change situations when they occur. This raises the question whether the organisation thinks it is not necessary, or if there is a lack of motivation to create such a group.

When asked about partnership networks, one of the respondents responded that the exact partnership number was not known (**E1**). Some research participants thought that an institution's list of partnerships could be bigger, and the overall partnership culture in the city among institutions could be stronger (**A2**).

Social resources and power constitute the third category group of the organisation's resilience model, presented in the theory section. In this part, attention is focused on the social aspects, which are important for a resilient organisation. The research participants (members of the administration) mentioned the style of shared leadership (**A1, A3**). This type of leadership became essential during times of external disturbances, since it enables the staff to ask for help while executing their tasks, and to share certain responsibilities among themselves, even if a certain area is not someone's specialisation. Other research participants reflected this idea by stating that when facing external shocks, everyone is delegated with tasks, and their responsibilities are clear (**A4, E4**). Another research participant argued that in times of unplanned change, leadership is stronger if it has a group dedicated to managing such situations (**E2**).

Table 5. Resource availability: adequate human resources (prepared by the authors, 2024)

| Category                 | Subcategory                                      | Quotes from the research participants   |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Adequate human resources | Incentives to attract people to work in a school | ‘The problem with teachers is not as big as with other serving personnel, because as a public institution, we cannot offer a big monetary incentive for this group of staff: no one wants to work for such a small wage’ (A2)<br>‘[...] the administration does everything it can to attract teachers and other workers to our organisation, but all of Lithuania is facing the challenge of a lack of teachers. Thus, this problem must be solved on a national level’ (E3)  |
|                          | Sufficient human resources                       | ‘I am quite satisfied with the personnel we have. There will always be some employees who are not optimistic about change; however, I believe resistance also depends on what kind of change it is. [...] The personnel are one of the strongest drivers of our organisation’ (A3)<br>‘I believe that our human resources are sufficient, because the more people there are in the organisation, the harder it is to manage and coordinate their activities’ (A4)<br>‘[...] sufficient, but I do not know about their preparedness for unplanned change. I am not sure how the personnel would react if such an event happens’ (E1) |
|                          | Lack of a crisis management group                | ‘[...] I see a lack of a work group responsible for crisis management in our school. We do not currently have one, so the information about such events comes from different employees’ (E2)  |
|                          | Teamwork and experience                          | ‘[...] when the start of the pandemic was challenging with regard to major uncertainty, the situation of the start of the war in Ukraine was handled much more strategically and effectively with regard to human resources’ (A1)<br>‘[...] in uncertain conditions, human resources often depend on the leadership of the administration. Sometimes you just work, not because someone wants you to, but because you need to. Of course, it depends on personal qualities as well as teamwork’ (E4)  |



Table 6. Resource availability: successful collaboration (prepared by the authors, 2024)

| Category                 | Subcategory                                     | Quotes from the research participants  |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Successful collaboration | Strategic network of partnerships               | <p>‘Our partnerships are focused on the activities of our institution, municipality, and other organisations, which help to handle the uncertain situations most effectively, to gather information and distribute it the fastest’ <b>(A1)</b></p> <p>‘[...] we communicate and partner with organisations we need: the municipality, the sports committee, and mainly partner during a crisis.’ <b>(A4)</b></p> <p>‘[...] the municipality, higher education institutions, the psychology centre: some of them are more active, others more passive’ <b>(E2)</b></p> <p>‘[...] our main partners are the municipalities, the Department of Education, other schools, the teacher education centre’ <b>(E3)</b></p> <p>‘[...] our main activity dictates that we partner with organisations that are related to education’ <b>(E4)</b></p> |
|                          | Sufficiency of partnerships                     | <p>‘[...] we do not have a serious partner which we could trust in times of external disruption. We partner with the municipality, but only because it is the founder of our school. [...] partnership is weak in our city’ <b>(A2)</b></p> <p>‘[...] partnerships are mostly delegated by the municipality’s Department of Education. We sometimes consult other sports schools in Lithuania, but overall we do not really have a constant, strategic partnership when we face challenges’ <b>(A3)</b></p>  |
|                          | Sufficiency of the knowledge about partnerships | <p>‘[...] despite working with the municipality and the Department of Education, I do not know any partners that the school has’ <b>(E1)</b></p>   |

Another aspect which was observed while analysing the scholarly literature is the engagement of staff in the process of managing unplanned change (Teo et al., 2017). It was observed that the administration is willing to include the remaining staff **(A1, A3)**, however, only as far as the organisation’s hierarchy allows to do it **(A4, E4)**, complemented by one of the members of the administration that the remaining staff do not want to be more included in the process **(A2)**. While the administration argues this, most teachers explain that they do not feel included, and that there could be a working group where they could assign a representative to express their opinion when the subject of such situations and ways to overcome external challenges are being discussed **(E1, E2, E3)**.

Table 7. Social resources and power: encouraging leadership (prepared by the authors, 2024)

| Category               | Subcategory                        | Quotes from the research participants  |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Encouraging leadership | Shared relationship                | <p>‘Our organisation aims to foster shared leadership. It can be done if the leader is able to trust his employees with regard to sharing responsibilities [...] The organisation must have experience in executing this kind of leadership, so that it does not create even more stress for the employees’ <b>(A1)</b></p> <p>‘We exercise shared leadership in our school. It helps to see the management of the organisation from a wider perspective. If I need help in organising something, I know that I can always ask for assistance from other departments and colleagues’ <b>(A3)</b></p> |
|                        | Municipality constraints           | <p>‘The leadership in our school is strong, but sometimes it seems that the municipality does not want us to exercise more of the leadership we have’ <b>(A2)</b></p>  |
|                        | Direct leadership                  | <p>‘The leadership in uncertain situations is clear and straightforward, everyone knows what to do, because the tasks are delegated for each role’ <b>(A4)</b></p> <p>‘[...] the administration actively engages in any situation like this, our responsibilities and lines of action become clear within a day of any disruptive event happening’ <b>(E4)</b></p>   |
|                        | Satisfaction with the leadership   | <p>‘[...] the role of leadership seems sufficient in times of crisis.’ <b>(E1)</b></p> <p>‘[...] so far, we trust the leader in his vision, and follow him. They execute administration’s role as they should’ <b>(E3)</b></p>   |
|                        | Need for a crisis management group | <p>‘[...] our school needs a crisis management group to communicate clear and concise information with us that would not create chaos and even more uncertainty’ <b>(E2)</b></p>   |

*Table 8. Social resources and power: actively engaged staff  
(prepared by the authors, 2024)*

| Category               | Subcategory                                  | Quotes from the research participants   |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Actively engaged staff | Willingness of the administration to include | ‘We try to share responsibilities with the staff members who have the experience and competencies to execute assigned tasks, as well as to take responsibility for it’ (A1)<br>‘We try to engage staff by communicating, and not being afraid to ask for help’ (A3)   |
|                        | Inclusion through the hierarchy              | ‘The staff are included through the hierarchy and communication with their supervisors [...] It is impossible to include all people directly in the decision making process’ (A4)<br>‘[...] in uncertain conditions there can only be hierarchical decision-making, because there is no time for discussions in these situations. However, more involvement of non-administration workers is needed’ (E4)   |
|                        | Motivation of the staff for inclusion        | ‘We could include other employees more, but they do not show any willingness to take the initiative’ (A2)   |
|                        | Level of inclusion from the administration   | ‘[...] more active inclusion is lacking’ (E1)<br>‘I cannot argue that teachers and other staff are included in solving crisis situations. If there was some kind of crisis management group, then yes, we could have a representative, but it is not the case now’ (E2)<br>‘The administration should pay more attention to the people they have next to them and encourage a more diverse leadership’ (E3) |

Most of the research participants (five out of eight) answered that communication is constant, and especially direct in cases of situations of unplanned change (A1, A4, E4). However, some respondents outlined that there is even too much information, and it often becomes unclear what the main message communicated is, as every member of the administration gives the same information, which in turn becomes repetitive (E1, E3). This is why a crisis management group, which would be the main channel for the distribution of information, is outlined as important and necessary in such situations (E2).

*Table 9. Social resources and power: constant communication*  
(prepared by the authors, 2024)

| Category               | Subcategory  | Quotes from the research participants  |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Constant communication | Clear communication of the administration                    | <p>‘[...] up-to-date and specific communication is crucially important in times of disruption. It is the responsibility of the administration to make sure that there are no information gaps and interpretations’ <b>(A1)</b></p> <p>‘Our leader succeeds in fostering efficient communication among the administration and overall staff’ <b>(A2)</b></p> <p>‘We constantly get in touch through virtual tools, as well as having meetings every other week where we communicate our problems and other challenges’ <b>(A3)</b></p> <p>‘Especially during crisis situations, communication is especially direct and fast, because we need to solve problems here and now to avoid uncertainty’ <b>(A4)</b></p> <p>‘[...] sometimes there is a lack of communication about all issues of the school, but in times of uncertainty the problems are communicated clearly, the administration talks with the teachers’ <b>(E4)</b></p> |
|                        | Redundancy of information                                    | <p>‘[...] sometimes there is too much information coming from various channels, we get lost in it’ <b>(E1)</b></p> <p>‘We have internal communication channels; however, the information in them is often redundant’ <b>(E3)</b></p>   |
|                        | Need for a crisis management group to distribute information | <p>‘[...] having a crisis management group would help to communicate between the administration and teachers more clearly and efficiently [...] currently, information often becomes repetitive and difficult to make conclusions from’ <b>(E2)</b></p>  |

ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE WHILE FACING CONDITIONS OF UNCERTAINTY...

Table 10. Level of understanding: opinions about resilience under conditions of uncertainty (prepared by the author, 2024)

| Category   | Subcategory                           | Quotes from the research participants   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| Opinion on the level of resilience in uncertain conditions at the school | Knowledge stemming from experience    | <p>‘There is always a group in the organisation which has a tendency to panic in such external disturbances. We never know how everyone will react when we face a similar situation again; however, current practice shows that we are able to make decisions in a relatively short period’ <b>(A1)</b></p> <p>‘There is always room for improvement, but at the current moment I believe we are prepared to face such situations’ <b>(A2)</b></p> <p>‘Situations that come up, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the admission of Ukrainian refugees, are solved fast, compared to what I know about the situation in other schools. Not only the administration but the teachers as well are able to reorient their activities and adapt to the new circumstances in a day. It is the result of our teamwork and experience’ <b>(E3)</b></p> <p>‘We have a team which has already dealt with such situations; we would know how to act if we faced something like before because of our knowledge and experience. We already know whom to quickly ask questions, to consult regarding different topics’ <b>(E4)</b></p> |
|  | Teamwork and communication            | <p>‘In times of uncertainty, the organisation’s resources and team are the key determinants of successful unplanned change management. If these aspects thrive, the organisation will succeed, and vice versa’ <b>(A3)</b></p> <p>‘[...] even though we all have different perspectives in the administration of a lot of things, when we face a challenge we can discuss and comfort each other if necessary. This shows a strong level of resilience, we are not afraid to face a challenge’ <b>(A4)</b></p> <p>‘It is important that the administration is able to quickly react to external changes and communicate it to employees. There is room for improvement, but our organisation does it successfully’ <b>(E1)</b></p>  |
|  | Level of leadership from the ministry | <p>‘The work of the administration and the clarity of communication could be strengthened, but there should also be more clarity from the Ministry of Education, I think that is what often hinders our administration in giving clear instructions’ <b>(E2)</b></p>  |

Finally, the respondents were asked what they thought overall about the level of resilience when their organisation faced conditions of uncertainty. Three main areas emerged which have already been reflected in their responses to previous questions. When considering resilience, both the administration and the employees value the aspect of learning from experience (**A1, A2, E3, E4**). It can be said that managing and adapting the whole organisation to situations like the Covid-19 pandemic and the start of the war in Ukraine are viewed as a source of learning and reflection, which helps to better prepare and face future global challenges. The staff emphasised that facing such situations successfully without strong teamwork and communication is impossible. The research participants agreed that both aspects are always in the process of improvement, but acknowledging these two attributes is already a characteristic of a resilient organisation.

## **Discussion and conclusions**

Resilience is defined as an organisation's ability to analyse the external environment and potential threats, face them, and be able to adapt to the changes fostered by such events. Models of organisational resilience have been presented in the scientific literature more profoundly, all of them focusing mainly on three stages: preparing for change, facing it, and learning from it. In order to achieve and maintain strong organisational resilience, three branches of the factors can be defined as follows: knowledge base, resource availability, and social resources and power. All of them help throughout the stages of organisational resilience.

Empirical research regarding a chosen institution in the educational sector, with eight research participants, revealed that the research participants were actively collaborating on their institution's experience in managing crises or unplanned situations, as well as the level of communication, and the importance of leadership, while the organisation faces and adapts to unexpected change. However, this research has revealed that despite the organisation's willingness to take additional measures ensuring the organisation's resilience, a lot of plans and actions depend on the owners of the institution. Thus, while the theoretical model claims that the adaptability of organisations is important to navigate unplanned change, organisations often cannot reach their highest potential due to bureaucratic constraints. Co-dependency then becomes an aspect, which in part hinders a public organisation's ability to react quickly to the change. Lastly, the research has shown that while the organisation shows a willingness to improve its knowledge of skills in managing unexpected change, the sources and possibilities are not sufficient to do so.

However, more elaborated empirical research is needed in order to reveal the phenomenon of organisational resilience in organisations of different types and sectors.

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Maja Timofejeva, Kristina Grumadaitė

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