
Influence of HR Practices on Organizational Resilience During Crises

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ABSTRACT

Organizational resilience has become a critical capability in an era marked by frequent crises such as pandemics, economic disruptions, technological failures, and geopolitical uncertainties. Human Resource (HR) practices play a central role in shaping how organizations anticipate, respond to, and recover from crises. This review paper examines the influence of HR practices on organizational resilience by synthesizing existing literature and conceptual insights. It explores key HR domains including talent management, employee engagement, leadership development, flexible work policies, communication systems, and learning culture, highlighting how these practices strengthen adaptive capacity and continuity. The study also discusses how crisis-oriented HR strategies such as remote work support, wellbeing programs, and crisis training enhance workforce stability and psychological safety during disruptions. A conceptual framework linking HR practices with resilience dimensions—preparedness, responsiveness, and recovery—is proposed. Findings indicate that organizations with proactive HR systems demonstrate stronger resilience outcomes, including sustained performance, reduced employee turnover, and faster recovery post-crisis. The paper concludes that HR should shift from administrative roles to strategic resilience enablers by embedding agility, trust, and learning within workforce practices.

KEYWORDS: *Organizational resilience, HR practices, crisis management, workforce adaptability, employee engagement, leadership, resilience capability*

INTRODUCTION

Organizations today operate in highly volatile environments characterized by rapid change and unexpected disruptions. Events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, economic downturns, cyberattacks, and supply chain interruptions have demonstrated that survival depends not only on financial or technological strength but also on human capital adaptability. Organizational resilience refers to the ability of a firm to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from adverse situations while maintaining core functions.

Human Resource (HR) practices influence how employees perceive uncertainty, cope with stress, and collaborate during crises. HR policies related to training, leadership, communication, and wellbeing determine whether the workforce remains engaged or becomes destabilized during disruptions. Traditional HR models often focused on efficiency and compliance, but modern crisis-driven contexts demand flexibility and psychological support.

Recent research highlights that resilient organizations invest in people-centric practices such as continuous learning, inclusive leadership, and adaptive work systems. Employees become more committed when they feel secure, informed, and empowered, which directly supports crisis response. Conversely, weak HR practices may intensify fear, absenteeism, and turnover, reducing organizational capacity.

This paper aims to review the influence of HR practices on organizational resilience during crises. It synthesizes theoretical and empirical findings to identify critical HR mechanisms that enhance preparedness, response, and recovery. A conceptual framework is also presented to explain the HR–resilience relationship.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

1. Organizational Resilience

Organizational resilience has emerged as a crucial concept in management literature as organizations increasingly face complex disruptions such as pandemics, economic shocks, technological failures, and environmental crises. It is commonly understood as the capacity of an organization to anticipate potential threats, cope with unexpected disturbances, and recover or even grow after adversity. Unlike traditional risk management that mainly focuses on prevention and control, resilience emphasizes adaptation, learning, and transformation during

uncertainty.

Scholars generally identify three core dimensions of organizational resilience: preparedness, responsiveness, and recovery. These dimensions represent sequential yet interconnected stages of how organizations deal with crises situations.

Preparedness refers to the degree to which an organization anticipates risks and develops readiness before a crisis occurs. Preparedness involves scenario planning, employee training, knowledge sharing, and resource flexibility. Organizations that invest in preparedness activities are better positioned to minimize disruption impacts. Preparedness also includes cultivating awareness among employees regarding potential risks and equipping them with skills to handle uncertainty. It is not only structural planning but also psychological readiness of workforce that matters.

Responsiveness represents the ability of an organization to react and adapt during the crisis itself. This includes maintaining operations, making rapid decisions, reallocating resources, and ensuring coordination among teams. Responsiveness depends heavily on employee initiative, leadership clarity, and communication effectiveness. Organizations that encourage autonomy and collaboration are more capable of responding quickly to disruptions. Responsive capability also includes emotional stability of employees, because crises often create stress and fear that can reduce performance.

Recovery involves restoration of normal operations and improvement after the crisis has passed. Recovery does not simply mean returning to previous state, but also learning from the crisis experience and strengthening future capability. Organizations with strong recovery orientation conduct post-crisis evaluations, update processes, and rebuild employee confidence. Recovery stage also includes innovation, as many organizations redesign strategies and structures based on lessons learned.

Organizational resilience therefore consists of both structural and behavioral elements. Structural aspects include policies, systems, and resources, while behavioral aspects relate to employee attitudes, trust, and adaptability. Among these, workforce capability often becomes the decisive factor because employees are the ones who interpret situations, make decisions,

and execute actions during crises. Even well-designed systems may fail if employees are disengaged or fearful.

Employees must remain motivated, cooperative, and innovative despite uncertainty and pressure. Their ability to share knowledge, support colleagues, and maintain commitment determines whether organizational functions continue. Hence, resilience is fundamentally a human-centered capability rather than purely operational or technological attribute.

2. HR Practices in Crisis Context

Human Resource (HR) practices refer to structured organizational policies and activities that influence recruitment, training, performance management, compensation, and employee relations. In stable environments, HR mainly ensures workforce efficiency and compliance with organizational goals. However, during crises situations, HR roles expand significantly beyond administrative functions.

In crisis contexts, HR becomes responsible for sustaining workforce stability, morale, and adaptability. Employees often experience anxiety, job insecurity, and workload changes during disruptions. HR therefore plays a mediating role between organizational demands and employee wellbeing. It supports communication flow, emotional reassurance, and coordination of workforce adjustments.

Crisis-sensitive HR practices include several interconnected domains:

Flexible work arrangements. Flexible scheduling, remote work options, and job redesign allow organizations to maintain operations when normal working conditions are disrupted. Flexibility also reduces employee stress by accommodating personal constraints such as health risks or caregiving responsibilities. Employees who perceive flexibility as organizational support tend to show stronger commitment during crises.

Crisis communication systems. Transparent and frequent communication is essential to prevent misinformation and fear. HR facilitates communication channels such as virtual meetings, updates from leadership, and feedback platforms. Effective communication ensures that employees understand organizational decisions, safety measures, and role expectations. It also strengthens trust in management, which is critical in uncertain environments.

Leadership support programs. Managers often face pressure in guiding teams through crises. HR-led leadership development programs help managers develop empathy, emotional intelligence, and crisis decision-making ability. Supportive leadership behaviors such as listening, fairness, and encouragement significantly influence employee morale and cooperation.

Employee wellbeing initiatives. Crises commonly generate psychological strain and burnout. HR initiatives such as counseling services, stress management workshops, health programs, and peer support networks help employees cope with emotional challenges. Wellbeing programs signal organizational care, which enhances loyalty and resilience.

Continuous training and reskilling. Disruptions frequently require employees to adopt new technologies, processes, or roles. HR training programs ensure that employees acquire relevant skills to adapt. Continuous learning also builds confidence and reduces resistance to change. Employees who feel competent are more willing to engage in crisis response activities.

These HR practices collectively create psychological safety and trust within the organization. Psychological safety refers to employees' perception that they can express concerns, experiment, and collaborate without fear of negative consequences. Trust emerges when employees believe that the organization values their wellbeing and fairness. Both psychological safety and trust enable employees to adapt quickly and support organizational goals during crises.

Thus, HR practices in crisis context move from routine administration toward strategic people-management aimed at stability and adaptability.

3. HR–Resilience Link

The relationship between HR practices and organizational resilience can be explained through three primary mechanisms: capability development, motivational support, and social cohesion. These mechanisms describe how HR activities translate into resilient organizational behavior.

a) Capability Development

HR practices such as training, skill diversification, and leadership development enhance

employee competencies required for crisis adaptation. Capability development ensures that employees possess problem-solving skills, technological literacy, and role flexibility. For example, cross-training allows employees to perform multiple tasks when staff shortages occur. Leadership training enables managers to coordinate teams and manage uncertainty.

Organizations with strong capability development systems show greater preparedness and responsiveness because employees can handle unfamiliar situations. Capability also promotes innovation, as skilled employees generate new solutions during disruptions. Therefore, HR investments in learning and talent management directly strengthen resilience capacity.

b) Motivational Support

During crises, employee motivation often declines due to stress, insecurity, or workload pressures. HR practices that provide recognition, communication, fairness, and wellbeing support maintain engagement and commitment. Motivational support ensures that employees remain willing to contribute effort even in difficult conditions.

Perceived organizational support is particularly important. When employees believe the organization cares about their safety and job security, they reciprocate through loyalty and extra-role behavior. Motivated employees cooperate with change initiatives and maintain productivity despite uncertainty. Thus, HR practices influence resilience by sustaining workforce morale and dedication.

c) Social Cohesion

Resilience is not only individual capability but also collective coordination. Social cohesion refers to trust, collaboration, and shared identity among employees. HR practices such as team-building, participative communication, and inclusive leadership foster positive relationships within the organization.

High social cohesion enables knowledge sharing, mutual assistance, and coordinated response during crises. Teams with strong trust adapt faster because members support each other and align goals. Conversely, low cohesion leads to conflict and fragmentation, weakening crisis response. HR therefore contributes to resilience by strengthening organizational culture and interpersonal connections.

Together, capability development, motivational support, and social cohesion form the behavioral foundation of organizational resilience. HR practices influence these mechanisms, which in turn determine how effectively organizations anticipate, respond to, and recover from disruptions. Hence, the HR–resilience link can be viewed as an indirect but powerful pathway through workforce capability and collective behavior.

KEY HR PRACTICES INFLUENCING ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE

1. Talent Management and Workforce Planning

Effective talent management ensures availability of skilled employees who can handle unexpected challenges. Workforce planning that includes succession planning and cross training reduces dependency on specific individuals.

During crises, organizations with diversified skill sets adapt faster because employees can assume multiple roles. For example, cross-trained teams maintain operations when staff shortages occur. Talent retention strategies such as job security assurances also reduce turnover during uncertainty.

Thus, talent management contributes to preparedness and continuity, strengthening resilience.

2. Training and Learning Culture

Continuous learning enhances employee adaptability, problem-solving ability, and innovation capacity. Training programs focused on digital skills, crisis management, and teamwork prepare employees for disruptions.

Organizations with strong learning cultures encourage knowledge sharing and experimentation, which supports rapid adaptation during crises. Learning orientation also reduces fear because employees feel capable of handling new demands.

Crisis-specific training, such as emergency response simulations or remote work skills, increases preparedness and response efficiency. Hence, learning practices are core drivers of resilience capability.

3. Leadership Development and Supportive Management

Leadership behavior significantly shapes organizational response to crises. HR practices that develop transformational and empathetic leaders promote trust and stability during uncertainty. Supportive leaders provide clear direction, emotional reassurance, and fairness in decision-making, which maintains morale. Crisis leadership training helps managers communicate effectively, manage stress, and coordinate teams under pressure.

Organizations with resilient leadership structures experience stronger employee confidence and cooperation, facilitating faster recovery. Leadership development is therefore a central HR mechanism in resilience building.

a) Employee Engagement and Communication

Transparent communication and employee engagement are essential during crises. HR systems that enable open dialogue, feedback channels, and participative decision-making reduce anxiety and misinformation.

Engaged employees demonstrate higher commitment and willingness to support organizational survival. Communication practices such as regular updates, virtual meetings, and accessible leadership messages ensure clarity and trust.

Poor communication, on the other hand, leads to confusion and resistance, weakening crisis response. Thus, engagement and communication practices directly influence resilience through workforce cohesion.

b) Flexible Work Policies and Work Design

Flexibility in work arrangements became particularly important during global disruptions. HR practices supporting remote work, flexible schedules, and job redesign allow continuity when physical operations are restricted.

Flexible work policies also reduce stress by accommodating personal constraints during crises, such as health risks or family responsibilities. Employees who perceive organizational support are more committed and productive.

Agile work design further allows rapid redeployment of resources across functions, ensuring operational continuity. Hence, flexibility enhances both responsiveness and recovery phases of resilience.

c) Employee Wellbeing and Psychological Support

Crises often create emotional distress, burnout, and insecurity among employees. HR wellbeing programs such as counseling, stress management workshops, and health initiatives provide psychological safety.

Wellbeing support maintains mental health and energy levels, enabling sustained performance during disruptions. Organizations that prioritize employee care foster loyalty and trust, which strengthens collective resilience.

Evidence suggests that wellbeing practices reduce absenteeism and turnover during crises, ensuring workforce stability. Thus, psychological support is a critical HR component of resilience.

d) Performance Management and Reward Systems

Adaptive performance management systems encourage innovation and flexibility rather than rigid targets. During crises, HR can revise performance expectations and reward collaborative behavior, problem-solving, and resilience-oriented actions.

Recognition of employee efforts during difficult periods increases motivation and morale. Fair and transparent appraisal systems also prevent perceptions of injustice during resource constraints.

Reward systems aligned with resilience values reinforce adaptive behaviors and organizational commitment.

HR PRACTICES ACROSS CRISIS PHASES

Organizational resilience is not a static capability but a dynamic process that unfolds across different stages of a crisis. Scholars commonly conceptualize crises in three broad phases: pre-crisis preparedness, crisis response, and post-crisis recovery. Each phase involves distinct

organizational challenges and requires different HR interventions. Human Resource practices influence how effectively organizations anticipate disruptions, sustain operations during adversity, and rebuild afterwards. Understanding HR roles across these phases helps explain how resilience is developed over time rather than only during emergencies.

1. Pre-Crisis Phase: Preparedness and Readiness

The pre-crisis phase refers to the period before a disruption occurs, when organizations anticipate potential risks and prepare their workforce and systems. HR practices during this stage focus on capability building, awareness, and preventive planning. Preparedness-oriented HR systems determine whether employees possess the skills and mindset necessary to cope with uncertainty.

One important HR practice in this phase is **strategic workforce planning**. By identifying critical roles, skill gaps, and succession pipelines, HR ensures continuity even if key personnel become unavailable during crises. Cross-training employees and encouraging multi-skilling reduces dependence on single individuals and increases workforce flexibility. Organizations with diversified competencies are more capable of adjusting roles when disruptions occur.

Training and simulation programs also contribute to preparedness. Crisis drills, emergency response training, and digital capability development enhance employee readiness for unexpected events. Such training builds familiarity with crisis procedures and reduces panic when disruptions actually happen. Employees who have previously practiced crisis scenarios tend to respond more confidently and effectively.

Another preparedness-related HR activity is **risk awareness and communication culture**. HR can integrate risk management discussions into meetings, orientation programs, and leadership development sessions. When employees understand potential threats and organizational contingency plans, they are psychologically prepared. This awareness reduces shock and confusion during actual crises.

Leadership pipeline development is equally crucial. HR initiatives that develop adaptive and empathetic leaders ensure that managers can guide teams through uncertainty. Prepared leaders are capable of making timely decisions and providing reassurance to employees. Without

leadership readiness, even well-designed crisis plans may fail.

Thus, pre-crisis HR practices strengthen organizational resilience by building human capability, awareness, and flexibility before disruptions arise. Preparedness reduces vulnerability and enables quicker transition into response stage.

2. Crisis Response Phase: Adaptation and Continuity

The crisis response phase begins when disruption actually occurs and organizational operations are threatened. This stage is characterized by uncertainty, rapid change, and psychological stress among employees. HR practices during response phase focus on maintaining workforce stability, ensuring communication, and enabling operational continuity.

One of the most critical HR roles during crises is **crisis communication management**. Employees require timely and transparent information about organizational decisions, safety measures, and role expectations. HR facilitates communication channels such as virtual town-hall meetings, emergency updates, and feedback mechanisms. Clear communication prevents rumors, reduces anxiety, and builds trust in leadership. Employees who feel informed are more likely to cooperate with crisis measures.

Flexible work arrangements become essential in response phase. Remote work systems, flexible scheduling, and temporary role adjustments allow organizations to continue functioning despite physical or logistical constraints. HR policies that support work-from-home infrastructure, digital collaboration tools, and workload redistribution help maintain productivity. Flexibility also acknowledges employees' personal challenges during crises, such as health risks or caregiving duties.

Another key practice is **employee wellbeing and psychological support**. Crisis situations often generate fear, burnout, and emotional exhaustion. HR initiatives such as counseling services, helplines, stress-management sessions, and peer support networks help employees cope with psychological strain. When employees perceive organizational care for their wellbeing, they remain committed and resilient despite adversity.

Supportive leadership and team coordination are also crucial during this phase. HR may

guide managers on empathetic communication, fair workload distribution, and conflict management. Leaders who show concern and fairness maintain morale and cooperation within teams. HR can also facilitate cross-functional collaboration to ensure that departments coordinate effectively during disruptions.

Performance management systems often need adjustment in crisis response stage. HR may temporarily revise targets, evaluation criteria, or reward mechanisms to reflect crisis realities. Recognizing employee effort rather than strict output helps sustain motivation. Employees are more willing to contribute when expectations are realistic and supportive.

Overall, HR practices during crisis response focus on adaptation, stability, and trust. These practices ensure that workforce remains functional and engaged, enabling organizations to sustain operations under pressure.

3. Post-Crisis Phase: Recovery and Renewal

The post-crisis phase begins when immediate disruption subsides and organizations move toward restoring normalcy. Recovery is not merely returning to pre-crisis conditions but involves learning, rebuilding confidence, and strengthening future preparedness. HR practices during this stage focus on reflection, recognition, and capability enhancement.

One important HR activity is **post-crisis learning and evaluation**. HR can facilitate debrief sessions, employee feedback surveys, and organizational reviews to analyze what worked and what failed during the crisis. These reflections convert experience into institutional knowledge. Lessons learned can then be integrated into updated policies, training programs, and contingency plans. Such learning orientation improves long-term resilience.

Employee recognition and morale rebuilding is another essential recovery practice. During crises, employees often exert extra effort and face emotional strain. HR initiatives such as appreciation programs, awards, or public acknowledgment help restore motivation and pride. Recognition signals that the organization values employee contributions, which strengthens loyalty after difficult periods.

Career development and reskilling programs also support recovery. Crises may alter job roles,

technologies, or organizational strategies. HR can provide training opportunities that help employees adapt to new requirements. Supporting career growth after disruption rebuilds confidence and reduces turnover risk. Employees who see future opportunities remain committed to organizational renewal.

Reintegration and work redesign may be necessary when organizations transition back from emergency conditions. HR ensures smooth return-to-work processes, re-alignment of roles, and restoration of team cohesion. Attention to work-life balance is also important, as employees may experience fatigue after prolonged crisis stress.

Additionally, HR plays a role in **organizational culture strengthening** during recovery. Emphasizing shared values such as resilience, collaboration, and learning helps organizations move forward positively. Cultural reinforcement ensures that crisis experiences translate into stronger identity rather than lingering fear.

Therefore, post-crisis HR practices contribute to resilience by transforming disruption into growth. Recovery stage closes the resilience cycle and prepares organizations for future crises.

4. Integrative Perspective Across Phases

Although presented sequentially, crisis phases are interconnected. Preparedness influences response effectiveness, and response experiences shape recovery learning. HR practices must therefore be continuous and integrated rather than episodic. Organizations that invest in people-centered HR systems before crises are better able to respond and recover afterwards.

The dynamic role of HR across phases demonstrates that organizational resilience is fundamentally a human process. Employees interpret threats, enact responses, and carry lessons forward. HR practices guide these behaviors through capability development, support, and cultural reinforcement.

In summary, HR contributes to resilience differently across crisis phases:

- **Pre-crisis:** building readiness and capability
- **Response:** maintaining stability and adaptation
- **Recovery:** enabling learning and renewal

Together, these phased HR interventions ensure that organizations not only survive crises but also evolve stronger from them.

Table 1: HR Practices Supporting Organizational Resilience Across Crisis Phases

Crisis Phase	HR Practices	Resilience Outcomes
Preparedness	Training, workforce planning, leadership development	Skill readiness, anticipation capability
Response	Communication, flexible work, wellbeing support	Operational continuity, employee stability
Recovery	Learning reviews, recognition, career support	Adaptation, performance restoration

HR PRACTICES AND DIMENSIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE

1. Preparedness

Preparedness involves anticipating risks and preparing employees for disruptions. HR practices such as crisis training, succession planning, and competency development enhance readiness. Organizations that invest in skill diversification and leadership pipelines show stronger preparedness because employees are capable of assuming new roles. Learning systems also support anticipation by promoting awareness of potential threats.

2. Responsiveness

Responsiveness refers to the ability to adapt during crisis events. HR practices affecting responsiveness include flexible work policies, real-time communication, and supportive leadership.

Employees respond effectively when they receive timely information and autonomy to act. Trust-based HR systems enable faster decision-making and coordination. Wellbeing programs further sustain employee energy and focus during prolonged disruptions.

Recovery and Growth

Recovery involves restoring operations and improving after crisis experience. HR practices such as performance feedback, training, and recognition support recovery by reinforcing learning and motivation.

Post-crisis reviews and learning programs help organizations institutionalize lessons, increasing future resilience. Career development support also rebuilds employee confidence and commitment after disruptions.

PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The relationship between HR practices and organizational resilience can be summarized as follows:

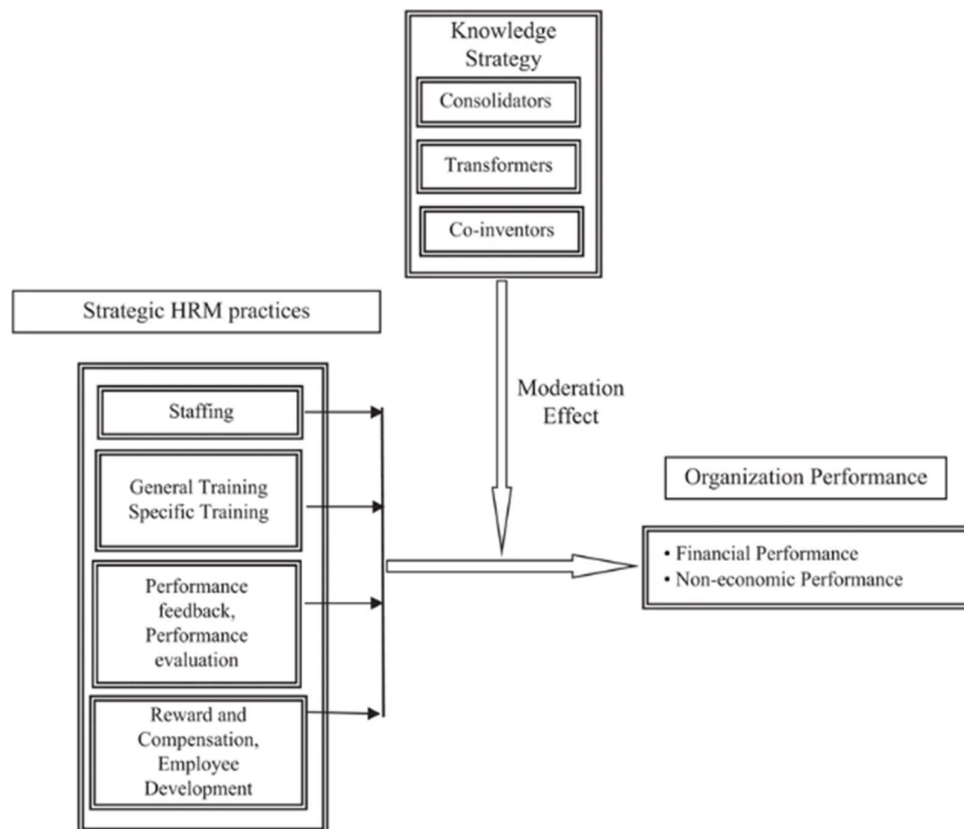


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of HR Practices and Organizational Resilience

- HR Practices: Training, leadership, flexibility, communication, wellbeing
- Workforce Capabilities: Adaptability, engagement, collaboration
- Resilience Outcomes: Preparedness, response effectiveness, recovery speed

The model suggests HR influences resilience indirectly through workforce behavior and capability.

DISCUSSION

The literature consistently indicates that HR practices are foundational to organizational resilience. Crisis situations reveal the importance of employee trust, skill diversity, and leadership support. Organizations with rigid HR systems struggle to adapt, while those with flexible and supportive practices maintain continuity.

A key insight is that resilience is not built during crises but developed through continuous HR investment. Learning culture, engagement, and leadership development must exist before disruptions occur. Crisis-specific practices such as remote work support are effective only when underlying HR systems are strong.

Another observation is that psychological factors play a major role in resilience. Employee wellbeing, trust, and communication influence behavior more than formal procedures. Thus, HR strategies must integrate emotional and social dimensions alongside operational planning. Furthermore, HR contributes to organizational learning after crises. Post-event reviews, training updates, and recognition practices transform disruptions into improvement opportunities. This learning orientation ensures long-term resilience.

However, challenges exist. Many organizations still treat HR as administrative rather than strategic. Limited resources, lack of leadership support, and resistance to flexible policies hinder resilience-oriented HR implementation. Therefore, strategic integration of HR in crisis planning is essential.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The review suggests several practical implications:

1. **Integrate HR in Crisis Planning:** HR should participate in risk assessment and contingency planning.
2. **Develop Crisis Leadership:** Training managers in empathy and communication improves workforce stability.
3. **Strengthen Learning Culture:** Continuous reskilling prepares employees for unexpected change.
4. **Promote Flexible Work Systems:** Adaptive job design ensures operational continuity.
5. **Prioritize Wellbeing:** Psychological support maintains productivity during stress.
6. **Enhance Communication:** Transparent information sharing builds trust and cooperation.

Organizations implementing these practices can strengthen resilience across crisis phases.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This paper is conceptual and based on literature synthesis rather than primary empirical data. Future research may test the proposed framework using quantitative models across industries. Longitudinal studies could examine how HR practices influence resilience over time and across different crisis types. Comparative research between sectors or countries may also provide deeper insights into contextual influences.

CONCLUSION

Organizational resilience has become essential in a world characterized by frequent crises and uncertainty. This review demonstrates that HR practices significantly influence resilience by shaping workforce adaptability, engagement, and stability. Practices such as talent management, learning culture, leadership development, flexible work policies, communication systems, and employee wellbeing collectively enhance preparedness, responsiveness, and recovery.

Resilient organizations view HR as a strategic function rather than administrative support. They invest in people-centered policies that foster trust, skills, and collaboration before crises occur. During disruptions, these foundations enable continuity and rapid adaptation. After crises, HR-led learning and recognition systems facilitate recovery and growth.

Therefore, strengthening HR practices is not only a workforce strategy but also a resilience strategy. Organizations that align HR with crisis management and long-term capability development are better positioned to survive and thrive in uncertain environments.

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