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Building Organizational Resilience via Creative Climate: A Literature Review

Abidah Harun Alias¹, Ismi Arif Ismail¹, Siti Noormi Alias¹, Zoharah Omar¹

¹Faculty of Educational Studies, University of Putra Malaysia (UPM)

Correspondence: Abidah Harun Alias (abidah.harunalias@gmail.com)

Abstract

Organizational resilience is crucial in improving service delivery when facing crises, natural disaster, and etc. that have adverse impacts on organizations. To be flexible, organizations depends on skills of individuals or groups to manage such challenges. Basically, organizations through their creative people will look for a solution to overcome such challenges to gain organizational value. For organizational resilience to be achieved, there must be the existence of an environment of creativity that employees can seize for organizational success. In other words, to facilitate organizational resilience, it is needed to create a creative climate within organizations. One of the indicators for organizational resilience is creativity support. Therefore, organizations should develop better practices and policies of creative climate in striving towards organizational resilience. It is highly recommended that an organization is looking into dynamic strategy of improving its resiliency by implementing the creative climate developed by Ekvall (1996) that consists of ten dimensions: challenge, freedom, idea time, trust and openness, dynamism, playfulness, debates, conflicts, risk-taking, and idea support within organization.

Keywords: creative climate, innovation, dynamic capabilities, organizational resilience

Introduction

Evidence shows that organizations today are bolstered with complex challenges such as natural disaster, economic or financial crisis, globalization, technology, innovation, and risk management which infuse all areas of organizations. In the United States of America for example, 50 percent of organizations without business recovery plans close their business after a major natural disaster. The data gathered from the department of Labour showed that companies that experience disaster, almost 65 percent fail, and 25 percent closing within 2 years (Curtis, 2008; SchWeber & Bouchard, 2011; Fani & Fard, 2015). To overcome the challenges, only flexible, agile and very dynamic organizations will thrive (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011). Thus, organizations need to find a constructive way forward to improve their service delivery especially during emergency times. The phenomenon forced the need for organizational resilience (Ho, Verreyne & Galvin, 2014). Organizational resilience is defined as the capacity of an organization to foresee, plan for, react and adjust to incremental change and sudden interruptions keeping in mind the end goal to survive and thrive (BSI Group, 2017). Organizational resilience is a multi-dimensional concept, and depends on creativity of individuals or groups to manage instability. Normally, most organizations raised on crucial issues after the disaster or crisis happened, and do not prepare for crisis at earlier stage particularly in terms of employee assistance, insurance and compensation as they assume that their organization has strong capability of resilience to bear shocks (Wang, Hutchins, & Garavan, 2009).

Organizational resilience and crisis management research is relatively new and limited in the field of human resource development (HRD). This belief is supported by many researchers and confirmed that organizational resilience and crisis management has not been extensively studied in HRD (Wang, Hutchins, & Garavan, 2009; Ho, Verreyne, & Galvin, 2014) though, the increasingly of organizational crises on employees as well as organizational performance. In addition, the effect of creative climate on organizational resilience is also not studied in a greater detail. On the other hands, developing creative climate is encouraging creativity atmosphere which helps organization to acquire the flexibility, and gives them a space to generate an idea for any situation and enhance creativity in organizations. Organizational resilience depends on the process of innovation followed by creativity (Amabile, 1997; Drucker, 1985; Okpara, 2007). Furthermore, the role of creative climate also important in learning organization (Samad, 2004). Creative climate has a major impact on psychological processes within organizations particularly in learning (Service & Boockholdt, 1998). As the results, the link between creative climate and psychological processes give direct effects to the individuals, working groups and the organizational outcomes (Samad, 2004). Some scholars state that organizational resilience is a vital source for adaptation (respond to customers' demands), competitiveness (the ability of organizations to provide efficient and effective service delivery) and value (the ability of organizations to increase their reputation) (Hamel & Valikangas, 2003; Moore & Moore, 2003; Deselnicu et al., 2007). However, what factors could be facilitated the organizational resilience?

Studies revealed that to achieve organizational resilience, it is a good practice to create creative climate within organizations. Rickards (1990) contends that creativity in a changing environment as a corporate necessity, not an 'add-on luxury'. Discussions among researchers regarding influencing factors on innovation usually mentioned that having a creative working climate within an organization relates to a suitable working culture to facilitate an environment which would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of products and services for organizational success. This idea had been put forward during the middle 1980's and late 1990's by several scholars including Ekvall, Arvonen and Waldenstrom-Lindblad (1983), Ekvall and Tangeberg-Anderson (1986), Zain Mohamed (1995), Zain Mohamed and Rickards (1996) and Amabile and Conti (1999) who focused on organizational climate factors that can foster creativity and innovation (Ismail et al., 2003; Ismail, 2006). According to Okpara (2007) innovation creates new demand and employees bring the innovations to the market and to facilitate innovation for organizational resilience, organization needs for creative climate within organizations (Amabile, 1997). Based on the evidences, this study intends to investigate the link between creative climate and organizational resilience.

Literature Review

Organizational Resilience

Historically, the resilience concept emerged in the early 1970s which focused on ecosystems that emphasis more on the ability of systems to cope with change (Petak, 2002; Folke, 2006). In 1980s, the attention of researchers about resilience was in behavioural studies where they highlighted on individual's ability to withstand and rebound from crisis (Walsh, 1996). In mid-1980s the focus was shifted to human environmental interactions, and sustainability (Lélé, 1998). Nevertheless, the concept of organizational resilience was first introduced by Wildavsky in 1988. In his research works, Wildavsky paid attention on juxtaposes anticipation and resilience. He urges caution in anticipatory strategies and advocates enhancing resilience through trial and error. In addition, there have been many research pertaining resilience in relation to healthcare systems (Mallak, 1998), business supply chains (Christopher & Peck, 2004), information systems (Comfort et al. 2001), and engineering (Woods & Wreathall, 2003; Hollnagel et al., 2006). Then, the research of resilience also concentrate to disasters such as earthquakes (Petak, 2002), Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans recovery (Campanella, 2006), and September, 11 (Kendra & Wachtendorf, 2003).

Subsequently, the definitions of resilience has been drawn from different fields for examples, ecology, psychology, materials science, and organizational studies. Many perspectives of different fields offered

a variety of ideas with regards to the meaning of resilience (Weick et al., 1999). In ecology studies, Holling (1973) defined resilience as a measure of the ability of systems to absorb changes and still persist. In this field, resilience envisions ecosystems as constantly changing and focuses on renewal and reorganization processes rather than stability or equilibrium. In psychology perspectives, resilience can be defined as the process of continually handling risks, stresses and strains, where an entity not only survives and thrives by positively adjusting to current adversity, but also, in the process of responding, strengthens its capability to make future adjustments (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003). While, in materials science, resilience can be defined as the ability to absorb energy in the elastic range (Nash, 1998).

In organizational studies, Wildavsky (1988) defined resilience as the capacity to cope with unanticipated dangers after they have become manifest, and learning to bounce back. Meyer (1982) defined resilience as an organization's ability to absorb a discrete environmental jolt and restore prior order. Besides that, resilience can be defined as the ability to anticipate a perturbation, to resist it by adapting and to recover by restoring the pre-perturbation state as much as possible (Madni, 2007). In addition, resilience is also defined as a system's capacity to maintain or restore an acceptable level of functioning despite perturbations or failures (Pinel, 2009). Lengnick-Hall and Beck (2003) defined resilience as an organization's transformational capability comprising a complex blend of perspectives, behaviours, processes, and contexts.

There are several examples associated to transformational resilience or known as 'bouncing back'. Firstly, Sandler O'Neill and Partners' case related to the attacks on the World Trade Centre in 2001. The company lost almost 40 percent of its employees, physical assets, and company's records. In spite of the massive losses, within one year the company was doing better in profits and revenue (Freeman et al., 2004). The best element of resilience was shown by the company about the ability to develop good relations with staff and customers extended to the company's success. Secondly, Odwalla's case in 1996, where a girl died after drinking apple juice contaminated with E. coli bacteria. Obviously, both events were managed effectively to enhance organizational dynamic capabilities that enable them to be resilient (Lengnick-Hall & Beck, 2003).

Based on the both examples, we can understand why and how organizations manage to thrive and enhance core dynamic capabilities when facing crisis, and why and how some organizations failed? According to Bell (2002) one of the components of resilience is firms' culture and it is built based on the principles of organizational empowerment, purpose, trust, and accountability. Bell added the root of organizational resilience is the workforce. Employees who are properly selected by their managers that talented and have a unique creativity usually, will overcome any obstacles or disruptions. Besides the workforce, organizations also allocate other resources like financial, material, etc. to establish organizational resilience. However, it can be understood that despite, organization provides sufficient resources to manage their organization, it absolutely not enough. Thus, organization needs great leadership as well as commitment, as the priorities to support creative climate in order to improve their systems in realizing towards organizational resilience.

Creative Climate

There are many creative climate studies have been conducted in the last ten or fifteen years (Bavec, 2009). According to Ekvall and Ryhammar (1999), the organizational creative climate has been the main subject of three large research programs in the 1980s and 1990s, two in the United States and one in Europe (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1989; Ekvall, 1991, 1996; Isaksen, 1995). Such research programs have produced many articles, theses, and also developed questionnaires to measure the creative climate: (1) the Work Environment Inventory (WEI) (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1989); (2) the Situational Outlook Questionnaire (Isaksen, 1995); and (3) the Creative Climate Questionnaire (CCQ) (Ekvall, 1996). However, the most popular creative climate for organizational studies (Shanker, 2013) has been proposed by Goran Ekvall (1996). He defined creative climate as an attribute of the organizations, a conglomerate of attitudes, feelings, and behaviour which characterizes life in

organizations. Porsze et al. (2012) state that ten dimensions of creative climate characteristics that developed by Goran Ekvall as stated below:

- Challenge - challenge climate is present when people feel joy and experience meaningfulness in their job, and so they invest much energy into their work.
- Freedom - freedom climate achieved when people are making contacts freely, exchange information, initiate and make decisions.
- Idea time - the amount of time organizational members can use for elaborating new ideas. Idea time situation exist to test and discuss suggestions and fresh impulses that were not planned and scheduled in advance.
- Trust and openness - trust and openness environment occur when everyone in the organization dares to put forward new ideas and opinions. Initiatives can be taken without fear of reprisal and ridicule in case of failure. There is also a straightforward communication style.
- Dynamism - the eventfulness of life in organizations. In dynamism environment new things happen all the time and ways of thinking are often changing. There is a psychological turbulence which is characterized by 'full speed' and 'breakneck'.
- Playfulness - the spontaneity and ease that is displayed. A relaxed atmosphere with jokes and laughter is present in a playfulness environment.
- Debates - the existence of clashes and encounters between different points of views, ideas, experiences and knowledge. In a debating organization many voices are heard and people are keen on putting forward their ideas and questioning the status quo.
- Conflicts - lack of emotional and personal tensions in the organization. When there are many conflicts people dislike each other and the climate is characterized by warfare, plots and traps being its usual elements.
- Risk taking - the tolerance of uncertainty in organizations. A risk taking climate means that decisions are quick and prompt, arising opportunities taken and concrete experimenting is preferred to detailed investigation and analysis.
- Idea support - the ways new ideas are handled in the organization. In a supportive environment bosses and workmates are attentive and supportive, people listen to each other, and there is constructive, and positive climate.

The ten dimensions of creative climate as described above are the characteristics of climate in which they reflect the possibility for certain creative behaviour that enables to culminate innovation (Porsze et al., 2012; Ku Saud, 2017; Zhou et al., 2017) which essential for organizations aim towards resilience.

The Link between Creative Climate and Organizational Resilience

Creative climate encourages people to generate new ideas and helps the organization to grow and increase its efficiency and at the same time it enables members to generate and implement creative ideas more effectively (Ekvall et al., 1983). From the statement has been made by Ekvall et al. (1983), it is clear that the main focus of creative climate is highlighted on the efficiency and effectiveness of organizations. Thus, it shows that the elements of efficiency and effectiveness is related to competitiveness which crucial for organizational resilience (Amabile, 1997; Parsons, 2007; Mafabi et al., 2015; Siddiqui, 2017).

Creative climate is an attitude of people in organization to be creative and innovative in their role. According to Ekvall (1996) organizational climate of creativity influences work and business processes (communication, cooperation, problem solving, decision making), and psychological processes (learning, creation, motivation or commitment). An organization has various disposable resources such as man, money, machines, and materials that are utilized during its operations' processes. However, such processes have different outcomes whether high or low quality products, loss of profit, improvement, and so on. This indicates that organizations need creative climate as an environment in organizations to support employees in giving a new and remarkable impact on the business processes which important to strive towards organizational resilience (Porsze et al., 2012). On the other hand, the reason of creating creative climate for any organization is to give freedom, trust, and idea support for

individuals learn and create innovation abilities, and it must come out through behavioural change where they are willing to be dynamic, take challenge, and risk. Creative climate is linked with improved job performance and satisfaction for organizational competitiveness. As a result, the organizations can produce the quality of products and services through creativity and innovation development. This contributes in building organizational resilience (Abdullah et al., 2006; Nasuridin et al., 2014).

There is another positive evidence in the literature on the relationship between creative climate and organizational resilience (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1989; Ekvall, 1991, 1996; Isaksen, 1995; Amabile, 1997). The concept of resilience identified as absorption, bouncing back, surviving, and flourishing from disruptions (Pfeffer, 1978; Carroll, 1998; Kendra & Wachtendorf, 2003; Tierney, 2003; Hale, 2006; Berkes, 2007; Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2008; Seville, 2009), in which organizations need to respond to instability and unpredictability from multiple points of view for instance, they centralize their internal control systems, they learn, and they adjust. It means that organization necessitates to be creative and innovative that can adapt them to manage instability, unpredictability, or disruptions consistently.

Researchers also studied on creative climate and adaptation which important for organizational resilience (Amabile, 1997; O' Donnell, 2006; Weeks, 2008; Mafabi et al., 2015). There are two types of adaptive capacity (Hale & Heijer, 2006; Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2008): (1) adaptive capacity implied organization's capability of bouncing back using prevailing creativity/skill and resources, and; (2) adaptive capacity can be built when organizations learn new creativity/skill to address outside challenges (Woods & Wreathall, 2008). Hollnagel, Nemeth and Dekker (2008) describe there are four capabilities that define organizational resilience. (1) the ability to be creative to respond in instabilities and threats; (2) the capability to monitor their circumstances; (3) the ability to predict troubles; and (4) the ability to learn from experience.

Wang, Hutchins and Garavan (2009) added an organization's ability for resilience in any crisis is produced through developing creativity among its employees, that when accumulated it workable to react when they encounter serious upsets. Accordingly, there is a direct link between creative climate and competitiveness which important to achieve organizational resilience (Ekvall, 1988, 1991, 1996; Isaksen, 1995; Bavec, 2009). The relationship helps organization to foresee challenges about the market environment and translate it into the organization (Wang, Hutchins & Garavan, 2009). It is the goal of HRD indeed to invest in developing employees' creativity in order to enhance innovation, so that organization are prepared with new ways to respond to crisis, risk or emergencies. Consequently, organizations can improve their systems and develop better skills of their employees to deal effectively in a competitive environment that leads to organizational resilience (Mitroff, 2005; Deselnicu et al., 2007; Parsons, 2007).

Conclusion

Organizations need to be more resilient to meet the changing demands of environment (Sarros, et al. 2008; Blanco & Botella, 2016; Ramli et al., 2017). In other words, organizations need to be flexible enough to answer all possible situations. Research revealed that creative climate contributes to organizational resilience where organizations normally institutionalize creativities by detecting difficulties and problems in inter-organizations and creating a new strategy and aims to use of them in improving the efficiency of work, produce high quality of products and services which those efforts are important to achieve organizational resilience.

Apart of that, creative climate plays a pivotal role in learning organization (Ismail et al., 2003; Samad, 2004). Organizational creative climate has a major impact on psychological processes in learning organization (Service & Boockholdt, 1998). Consequently, the combination of creative climate and psychological processes exert a direct effects on the individuals, working groups and the organization outcomes (Samad 2004). Thus, it shows creativity is a part of organizational climate that has positive outcomes.

It is important for organizations support and encourage employees to transfer their creativity and translate it into work to be more excellent, specifically, the HRD practitioner as an expert in understanding the ability for resilience. Thus, HRD practitioners should develop new creative climate policies that are geared towards a greater organizational resilience. This study suggests that any organization that plans new strategy for organizational resilience should consider the ten dimensions of creative climate by Ekvall (1996) namely challenge, freedom, idea time, trust and openness, dynamism, playfulness, debates, conflicts, risk-taking, and idea support in a way that to produce high quality of products and services.

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