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Integrative HCM View of Resilience and Wellbeing

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5 Integrative HCM View of Resilience and Wellbeing

Peter Essens, Maria-Teresa Lepeley, and Nicholas J. Beutell

Introduction

One of the most outstanding consequences of the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic is the long-lasting effects on people's lives and working conditions. These are critical concerns of Human Centered Management (HCM) in general, and of this book on Human Centered Management and crisis in particular. This chapter addresses the following four critical dimensions for promoting people's wellbeing in a workplace challenged by the global VUCA environment: Resilience, needed to bounce back from difficult times; Empowerment, to create space for creativity and responsiveness promoting engagement, active participation and self-determination; Talent Management (TM), aiming to incentivize work engagement and satisfaction in organizations and the Life-Work Continuum (LWC), which views life and work as an integrated sequence of events rather than an ongoing confrontation between separate and often conflicting domains. The argument is that these key factors need to be addressed not only in policies but also in action ensuring people's wellbeing and organizational sustainability.

We live in a complex and dynamic world where disruptions that affect people, such as the Covid pandemic and other crises, have a dramatic impact across societies. Social and technical systems are interconnected to such an extent that local disasters have regional and global spillover effects. Studies show that disruptions are increasing in number and magnitude (UNDRR, 2020). The increasing interdependence of economic, social and security systems, supply chains, infrastructures and information systems increases vulnerability because of intensive urbanization, dependence on vital and virtual infrastructures, raw materials and climate change.

All systems face difficulties in remaining operational when unexpected and sudden changes in conditions occur. Systems are designed and prepared for known and expected disruptions, but when disruptions fall outside these boundaries, functioning can easily break down, which can compromise sustainability, affect interconnected systems and generally affect the wellbeing of the people they serve.

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Some studies suggest that the economic impacts of disasters are relatively small from a macroeconomic perspective. However, the timing of the recovery and reconstruction strategies has proved crucial. Simulation analyses (input–output models) with existing data have shown that while total impacts of disasters are significant and complex domestically, if recovery and reconstruction strategies had not been deployed in the year following the disaster, the global effects would have been much more negative (Okuyama, 2010). Thus, the time window of measurement of effectiveness is relevant. This macroeconomic result illustrates the benefits and the need for people and organizations at the organizational and microeconomic levels to be better prepared for the impact and associated costs of unexpected disruptions.

HCM organizations promote a positive and constructive orientation through a strong sense of purpose and core values based on a culture that fosters high employee engagement and effective trust-based relationships necessary to shape the organization's social capital.

Resilience strategies

Organizations, as social systems, have a critical role in responding to emergencies and crises in society. So maintaining functionality and resilience is not only in their self-interest, but also a public obligation for maintaining services that provide products to communities and other organizations in their supply chain. HCM emphasizes that organizations can only achieve this important social responsibility goal by first meeting the needs of society and supporting their employees (Lepeley, 2017).

Strategies to withstand and adapt to changing circumstances, recover from shocks and stresses and learn from them, are known as resilience strategies. The literature on resilience is growing very rapidly. A search yielded 42,000,000 hits on Google and 31,561 hits in the academic literature (Web of Science; May 7, 2022). Peer-reviewed academic publications with "resilience" in the title (as a proxy for relevance) increased from 80 to nearly 6,000 between 2000 and 2021, indicating exponential growth. But the distribution of sources and applications is diverse: environmental leadership (43%); health/personal studies (41%); engineering (7%) and management (7%). Organizational resilience as a topic represents 8% of this set and shows rapid growth from 30 to 605 between 2010 and 2021.

The number of publications on resilience is increasing and most note that definitions range from sustaining and recovering to preparing or thriving in response to shocks. And this occurs at different levels of analysis, including individuals, teams, organizations, communities, regions, nations and in diverse systems that include but are not limited to financial, ecological, supply chains and migrations. Moreover, disruptions, shocks and disasters are of diverse nature, with diverse consequences. ISO quality standards define organizational resilience as the "ability of an organization to absorb and adapt in a changing environment" (International Organization for Standardization, 2017). Clarity about what resilience is, is a pending academic need with great relevance to practitioners who need a deeper understanding of processes that affect resilience, particularly from the moment a shock occurs, to the recovery phase and ultimately to a new level of functioning.

The bathtub as a resilience model

A process view of the level of functioning of a system after a disruption provides a detailed account of the resilience response of the system, which facilitates the identification of effective assessment of interventions. This chapter presents a generic model of a resilience process used in HCM practice. Called the "Bathtub", the model, shaped like a bathtub, represents the various levels of crisis response in relation to performance. Derived from an infrastructural systems context (see Goodwin, Essens & Smith, 2012), the "Bathtub" represents a generic system response that researchers and users can apply in labeling and discussing prototypical phases in the resilience process.

The initial response to disruptions (thick arrow) is to resist a change using known routines and quick fixes (B). When effects pose a potentially higher risk of greater system failure, other interacting parts of the system must be smoothly degraded (C) to a steady state that allows as many essential functions as possible (D). In this state, some level of recovery performance can be achieved while repairing, reorganizing and planning for gradual recovery (E). Getting the system back to the desired level of performance requires adaptation to new conditions. An important feature of the model is the consideration of time. Because time intervals become a crucial component, the faster the system can return to normal operation, the greater the benefits of resilience. Based on practice, this model assumes that recovery

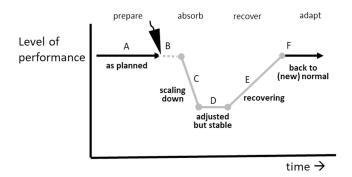


Figure 5.1 Phases of the Bathtub Model.

takes more time when the relapse is greater – downscaling, stabilization and recovery are strongly related.

From a systems' perspective, resilience encompasses multiple interactions within, between and across subsystems and levels of analysis that are common in organizations increasing the complexity of resilience. Variants of the Bathtub model have been used to describe the response profile following disruptions, often depicting a minimum stability period with immediate recovery (OECD, 2020). The Covid-19 crisis experience has shown that creating a (short) stable period is important for reorganizing the organization to cope with a persistent threat (see hospital example, Chapter 1 of this book).

Networks are relational resources that connect workers and interaction patterns in organizations. Networks transcend hierarchies and silos, enable rapid exchange of information and creative ideas with situation-specific responses. Networks connect different levels of the organization enabling a fluid exchange of people's knowledge with organizational-level skills and abilities that form the cognitive, behavioral and relational capabilities to deal with crises resulting from disruption. Essential behavioral elements of resilience are learned resourcefulness, ingenuity and initiative (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011).

The bathtub model reinforces the critical dimension of time in dealing with disruptions. It reveals essential aspects of crises that might have differential effects at different levels: individual, team, organization and social system. Although resilience at all levels must be considered, we believe that resilience is a necessary, but insufficient condition for fully responding to crises overtime. We advance several other factors that help to complete the picture, factors that are bolstered by resilience but that go beyond resilience for successful crisis management. These factors include empowerment, TM and the LWC.

Integrating empowerment, TM and LWC with resilience

Among ongoing challenges, old management approaches no longer offer solutions. To counteract and overcome obstacles in the current environment, 4 complementary topics have become critical for advancing, restoring and strengthening organizations to ensure long-term sustainability in the highly volatile conditions of disruptions and crises. The analysis integrates Resilience, one of HCM's 5 Pillars¹ (Lepeley, 2017), with 3 other key concepts: Empowerment, TM and the LWC (see Figure 5.2).

Empowerment focuses on involvement, engagement, active participation and self-determination, seeking to link the individual's wellbeing to his or her social context (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Supporting empowerment at work means providing the means to do work effectively, particularly through competency development, providing meaningful and challenging work and enabling influence over work-related decisions. TM,

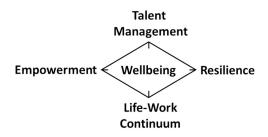


Figure 5.2 Resilience with empowerment, talent management and Life–Work Continuum contributing to wellbeing.

as the third Pillar of HCM, comes to the fore as a systematic approach to bring together those factors that optimize individual contributions and performance of each person in the organization by building resilience, as the pursuit of wellbeing is a common denominator for people and the workplace.

We argue that empowerment provides a solid foundation for resilience (see also Chapter 1). Both empowerment and resilience are strength-based approaches that utilize personal and structural resources for individuals to develop and grow despite obstacles, crises and setbacks. Empowerment provides the desired flexibility in the LWC to align life and work demands with organizational performance needs. Empowerment with its focus on engagement, individual development, growth and wellbeing is also a driver for TM. Personal and organizational strength is the collection of talent, competencies, skills and knowledge that employees have accumulated overtime, that are enacted when dealing with complex situations, either alone or by cooperating with colleagues.

Figure 5.2 shows the relationships that connect Resilience with Empowerment, TM and the LWC to increase wellbeing in HC organizations. TM in turn provides inputs to the other 3 components that are sources of people's wellbeing. In HCM, people's wellbeing in the workplace is a critical component necessary for achieving quality standards that ultimately determine extraordinary organizational performance and long-term sustainability. (Ochoa, Lepeley, & Essens, 2019).

The correlation between personal and organizational wellbeing is the main objective of HCM. Studies on job satisfaction and life satisfaction (Beutell & Schneer, 2014) show that, on the positive side, 60% of a sample of managers and professionals show a spillover relationship (i.e., a positive association between job satisfaction and life satisfaction). This contrasts with 32% showing an inverse association, while 8% show little or no relationship between work and life satisfaction.

In the aging workforce, these relationships shift as people retire, seek "bridge work", or start new careers or businesses. Disruptions caused by the

pandemic have affected and shifted people's priorities, including the relationship between individual and organizational wellbeing. In this environment, wellbeing analyses must be expanded to explore new dynamics as integral components of the LWC in a changing organizational reality.

New crises, old skills

A new HCM culture in organizations requires new skills along with receptivity to new ideas and perspectives to revise old assumptions and generate effective new solutions to crisis situations. In effect, this is a cultural transformation. Learning basic routines is essential as a first response to crisis situations. Moreover, new circumstances may require a different course of action than the usual norms. Change increases the likelihood of chaotic situations when it is unexpected, and responses are not well synchronized. At all organizational levels, this requires a thorough understanding of the situation and how organizational processes adapt to related actions. Communication and information sharing combined with guidance to coordinate initiatives are essential. Relational capabilities within and outside the organization are based on feeling safe to ask questions, seek information, discuss organizational performance and then take shared responsibility for responding to the crisis. These interactions are essential for developing joint and accomplishments actions (Weick, 1993). Empowerment, delegation of power and responsibility are important attributes in an organizational culture where employees are engaged in and accept higher levels of personal responsibility to adapt more quickly to overcome shocks and disruptions.

Organizations and individuals are better prepared to manage shocks based on 3 critical elements that underlie a resilient organization:

- 1 functional and effective networks and relationships,
- 2 ability to change, agility to move forward and innovate and recognize and effectively respond to threats, and
- 3 leadership that can provide the trust needed for collective cohesion and collaboration which foster a culture of respectful interactions that are essential as foundational elements of a resilient organization.

Related approaches to building organizational resilience emphasize that resilience requires a strategic approach that integrates resilience thinking into organizational planning. Building on the experience of disasters in New Zealand, Vargo, Sullivan and Parsons (2013) developed a resilience scorecard with 13 indicators that represent 3 key clusters of organizational factors that represent "the ability to survive a crisis and thrive in a world of uncertainty": leadership and culture, networks and relationships and change readiness.

Achieving change readiness and preparedness for handling shocks requires the development and deployment of Soft Skills as core requirements for effective human interactions in HCM organizations (Lepeley, 2021b). Alexandra Samuel, who works with leading global companies to understand online customers and create data-driven reports, highlights the importance of the following Soft Skills in the article The Soft Skills of Great Digital Organizations: goal-oriented thinking, collaboration skills, communication skills, learning skills, trouble shooting skills, playfulness and sense of humor (Samuel, 2016).

Optimizing TM in disruptive times

The disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic (starting in early 2020), including but not limited to social distancing and prolonged lockdowns to stop the spread of the deadly disease, profoundly changed organizational structures and strategies in the traditional workplace. Two years later, that change is ongoing and uncertainty is compounded by war in Europe and energy, economic and financial crises affecting organizational sustainability and the world, the costs of which threaten organizational sustainability and the wellbeing of people.

Of the many disruptions associated with the pandemic, one that has received much attention is a tidal wave of workers quitting their jobs in the United States and around the world. This unusual trend dubbed the "Great Resignation" is leading to more research to better understand the causes of the phenomenon. In addition to pandemic disruptions, it has widespread implications for employers and organizations in all sectors and industries who are perplexed by the causes that lead massive numbers of employees to resign. Organizations need data-driven knowledge to create targeted retention programs and adjust management principles and practices if necessary (i.e., a culture shift).

The Great Resignation is covered in other chapters of this book (see Chapters 2 and 6). Here, suffice it to say that from the HCM perspective on TM, the Great Resignation is not surprising. On the contrary, it emerged as a natural response and natural reaction by employees to traditional organizational cultures and management strategies focused on resources, often at the expense of and ignoring the wellbeing of people, that have prevailed unchanged for more than a century. The Great Resignation ultimately provides proof that old tactics are no longer effective. Today, working people have access to vast amounts of information and opportunities to compare and decide on the best employment opportunities in organizations that match their needs, interests and values. In other words, people can more easily identify organizations that can value their talents, utilize them and promote their wellbeing.

However, recent studies show that, in many cases, the Great Resignation results in Great Regret (Tanzi, 2022). As the wave of resignations related to Covid risks in the workplace and new opportunities to work from home have prompted working people to reassess their work and lives amid the

turmoil of a pandemic, but sources show that some of those who quit their jobs are having second thoughts and reconsidering. Of those who found a new job after quitting, a significant percentage say the new job did not meet their expectations. Job changers also say they miss colleagues and social contacts. Since many people spend as much time at work as they do with family and friends, those who build strong personal relationships with coworkers have a major impact on how they view the new job and how likely they are to stay or regret it. The disruptions that precipitated the Great Resignation took a long time to build up in the workplace, and they will take a long time to resolve unless the "people-centered" paradigm prevails.

Anthony C. Klotz, professor of management at University College London's School of Management, who coined the term "Great Resignation", believes the rate of quitting will remain high in the short term, but an impending economic downturn and general uncertainty in labor markets could change things. A global recession would slow the quit rate because during a recession, labor markets deteriorate and opportunities for workers to change jobs decrease. Klotz estimates that resignation rates may not be as high as they were during the pandemic, but the rates will fall. Yet there are already signs that rising costs of living and inflation are affecting worker behavior. The United Kingdom has coined the term "Great Unretirement", in which older people return to the workforce under pressure to cope with the rising cost of living. Other authors say it is unclear whether even a global financial crisis could reverse the tide of Great Resignation.

Managing talent

What makes organizations sustainable in the long run and ensures that employees stay at work are organizational conditions embedded in a people-centered culture that promotes empowerment for increasing people's wellbeing. This means that organizations make efforts, not only implicitly but explicitly, to discover, appreciate, value and use the talents of all employees, regardless of their level of responsibility in the organization. TM is 1 of the 5 Pillars of HCM in the framework that consolidates this model. In times of crisis, the above discussion identified challenges that confirm that the approach organizations take to manage people's talent is a critical element of sustainability.

HCM uses the term talent because unlike mere "work", talent represents value-added personal contributions that result in heightened job performance and work engagement enhancing job satisfaction. The sum of individual talents in an organization is a key input for continuous improvement, quality standards and organizational productivity that determine long-term sustainability.

The talent of working people is rooted in their human capital formed by education, experiences, skills, natural and acquired abilities, beliefs and values that contribute to optimal performance by using their personal abilities when given the opportunity. Human Capital is a Pillar of HCM, a personal asset that people have in deploying their talents or abilities that optimize critical thinking and problem-solving. It could be said that human capital is an inert asset until people activate it to solve problems in life and at work. Talents contribute to the development of resilience and agility needed for continuous performance improvement to achieve quality standards at the personal and organizational levels.

In HCM, talent is strongly related to Soft Skills. In terms of human capital, the difference between hard skills achieved through cognitive knowledge and formal education and Soft Skills, which are more intuitive and closely related to special personal talents, is largely related to informal education, observation and imitation. Lepeley (2021a) defines Soft Skills as personal attributes and traits possessed by people that enable them to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people. Soft Skills include self-esteem, emotional intelligence, autonomy, empathy, patience, self-awareness, effective listening and collaborative skills. Soft Skills are acquired or learned by different means via experiences at all ages. The earlier, the better to consolidate social interactions later in life and at work. In HCM, Soft Skills are highly associated with resilience, which, at the organizational level, prepares people for understanding and moving forward at various stages in the Bathtub Model (see Figure 5.1).

Organizational structures for TM

Human resources (HR) offices traditionally play an important personnel administration role in organizations – working hours must be recorded and salaries paid. In addition, functions such as developing career paths and designing compensation strategies emerged. A major shift in HR since the 1990s is the responsibility of line management for the implementation of HR policies in the workplace (Paauwe, 2007). Line managers are often less equipped for handling this role, because they have identified with the traditional human resource perspective, viewing people as a factor of production, rather than talent that enhances longer term benefits of employee wellbeing.

To reverse this trend and put employee wellbeing at the center of organizational change, HCM organizations must establish a dedicated TM entity, led and managed by multidisciplinary teams, supported by networks of psychologists, economists, educators and other specialties, aligned with organizational objectives. TM teams are responsible for optimal matching of job requirements with employee interests, talents and responsibilities. Efforts are made to systematically develop and methodically assess progress to identify areas in need of improvement in accordance with HCM Pillar 5, Sustainable Quality Management specifications.

To achieve TM optimization, TM team leaders develop design tools, ideally internally, to ensure that such tools are manageable and easy to use throughout the organization. This facilitates keeping realistic records of progress with intentional awareness for ensuring that the appraisal system

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does not overwhelm personal responsibilities, autonomy, or employee performance levels.

TM Team actions and processes include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Identify/design effective instruments to assess the talent of people at all levels of the organization.
- Secure empowerment strategies, with optimal alignment of responsibilities with personal talents, aimed at promoting autonomy, empowerment at work, commitment and satisfaction at work.
- Assess and provide training and education opportunities for personal improvement to support Human Capital, talent development, Resilience and Agility.
- Train employees with leadership potential to advance in the organization and serve as mentors to other employees.
- Reward and recognition systems that provide constant feedback leading to personal performance improvement and greater connection with the organization's mission, vision and goals.
- Promote connectivity, collaboration and cooperation among the organizations that share and enhance wellbeing in the workplace.
- Hire people with talent congruent with HCM.
- Provide support for employees that are laid off, to expedite the transition for the departing employee, to maintain organizational stability.
- Promote wellbeing in the workplace.

Actions and processes of employees' responsibility include the following:

- Assume responsibility for job requirements that secure knowledge and the conviction to be fulfilled.
- When unsure about actions to follow and move forward, seek advice from organizational leaders and colleagues. Don't wait and never waste time seeking improvement.
- Make sure personal resilience skills match those of the organization or seek help to synchronize them.
- Apply empowering strategies to colleagues, clients and customers for respectful interaction and trusting relationships.
- Assume personal responsibility that life and work are a continuum in the same life experience, not separate, discrete and conflicting life dimensions.
- Strive for smooth integration between work responsibilities, life tasks and leisure as critical elements of holistic personal wellbeing (Lepeley, 2021a).

The LWC and wellbeing for sustainability

LWC was developed by HCM scholars as an analytical framework to monitor life and work as integral dimensions of the holistic life experience of working

people (Beutell, Kuschel, & Lepeley, 2021). Rather than separate and disconnected domains, LWC helps to assess the effectiveness and continuous improvement of wellbeing that affects life, work and people's ability to engage in work so that organizations optimize their talents as a necessary condition to achieve high performance leading to long-term sustainability.

Talented people use Soft Skills effectively to assess their impact during disruptions and crises inside and outside the workplace. This is the new imperative for organizational cultures as the pandemic has reinforced the deep connections between personal wellbeing, life, family and work. The LWC is a concept, aligned with HCM, that shows that people's lives are not dualistic with a clear separation between family and work, but instead recognizes a highly integrated and holistic approach to life. In this environment, Soft Skills play an important role in helping people understand the inevitable connection of their lives with a greater awareness of personal needs in life and at work, in sync with the needs of other people within an expanded social context.

Recent trends, consistent with HCM, demonstrate the importance of a successful LWC transformation by implementing new ways of working during crises. There is considerable evidence that few organizations have implemented organizational requirements in a way that closely matches employee needs. In large part, this is due to ignoring and overlooking the complex connectivity that exists between personal life and work responsibilities contained of individuals. This is an essential focus as companies and their employees negotiate new expectations. During the pandemic, when all but the "essential workers" reported to the workplace on site, most employees began working from home. The new work environment underwent radical changes, increasing health risks and safety concerns. In this new and challenging environment, the role of Soft Skills in remote and hybrid forms of work must be expanded.

Relating to the "Great Resignation", discussed above, LWC argues that employees largely decide to resign from jobs because their work responsibilities interfere with their personal life and family priorities, confident that they will get a better job, viewing life and work as a continuum, rather than as opposing dimensions or parts in one person's life, as is traditionally considered in organizations where management focuses on resources at the expense of people's needs. LWC is a consideration in layoff decisions. The emphasis companies place on "workism" and the belief that working more hours automatically leads to higher productivity is an illusion that has been perpetuated but is unfounded.

Consider the following quote from Huffington and Fisher (2022):

But it's not flexibility for its own sake—behind the desire for flexibility is a desire to recalibrate our relationship between our lives and our work. That's what's at the heart of the Great Reevaluation. People want their lives to come first.

The multidimensional disruptions caused by the confluence of recent crises require people and organizations to reassess their life expectations, rethink organizational structures and workplaces, and create new strategies to manage the future. Solutions are unlikely to come from traditional resource-based approaches of the industrial past, but rather from human centered organizational strategies that will shape resilience strength in emerging sustainable organizational cultures.

Concluding comments

The disruptive effects of the Covid pandemic have exposed subcutaneous shortcomings of management models that focus on prioritizing resources over the wellbeing of people by exposing the exponential challenges facing organizations in the global VUCA environment. The "Bathtub" model shows how time influences crisis responses in mobilizing individuals, teams and organizations. Unprecedented phenomena such as the Great Resignation confirm that large numbers of workers worldwide are dissatisfied with the work they perform daily. Employees are searching for workplaces where people's wellbeing is reflected not only in policies but also in actions. Despite growing evidence of the need for change, the transition to the human centered paradigm is slow and increasingly challenged by new crises.

Disruptions provide compelling evidence of the importance of paying attention to the development of resilience in people and organizations. This focus strengthens and continuously improves the LWC approach and empowerment strategies as essential components of effective human centered TM needed for achieving and maintaining sustainability in organizations. In HCM, TM is essential for the accumulation of human capital because the growth of individual and collective talent depends on effective organizational structures and strategies in a stimulating human centered environment for overcoming the long-term effects of ongoing crises. HCM is needed for ensuring organizational sustainability.

Note

1 The five pillars aimed at developing essential elements of Human Centered Management are (1) Human Capital; (2) Disruption Resilience; (3) Talent Management; (4) Agility and (5) Sustainable Quality Model.

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