

Enhancing Organizational Performance Through Relationship Resilience (A Study Of Manufacturing Firms In Nigeria)

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Citation: Adejumo Olaoluwa Adedayo, (2024), Enhancing Organizational Performance through Relationship Resilience (A study of Manufacturing firms in Nigeria), *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(8) 405 -413
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i8.7343

Introduction

Organizations, during trying moments, are expected to dig deep and make necessary adjustments to remain competitive and/or relevant in the industries and markets they play in (Vakilzadeh & Haase, 2020). In recent times, businesses have had to look beyond the fundamental factors of production and give attention to the influence that changes in the environment portend (Eketu, 2015). These changes are one of the viable explanations for the rate of business failures in recent times. According to the study of Hasan et al (2022), business failure is on the increase, with many firms folding up within the first five years of existence. The impact of these collapses on the economic growth and development in the different sectors is huge. Firms are folding up at unprecedented rates, and it has a negative ripple effect on economic development, hence efforts should be geared towards investigating and taking necessary steps to mitigate re-occurrence (Abdusamatovna, 2022).

Studies (such as Nissen, 2014) have attempted to unveil the circumstances that threaten the viability of firms and revealed different dimensions through which change manifests. Among the uncovered challenges of business is the more complex and turbulent business environment, characterized by rapid technological and behavioral changes, and other inter-dependencies beyond the firm's control; these identified challenges are linked with business collapse across industries.

This need to have more firms that have the capabilities to weather the storm has led to *Organizational Resilience* being a buzzword in contemporary discourse, it is currently perceived as an integral part of business strategy, gaining momentum among high-quality journals in management (Clement & Rivera, 2017; Linnenluecke, 2017; Williams et al, 2017). The scholarly engagements show that Organizational Resilience is a vital capability that needs to be enhanced for organizations to survive in an uncertain environment, which agrees with the postulation of Lengnick-Hall et al (2011). As much as Organizational Resilience has enjoyed significant scholarly attention, its implementation among industries is not as visible as expected, which is attributed to the multidimensional nature of the concept as posited by Salanova *et al.* (2012). However, the general understanding of the concept revolves around the need for firms to develop capability to profitability deliver goods and services despite sudden adverse changes in the business environment. The increasing fluidity and complexities in the environment are challenging the ability of organizations to stay afloat. Some of the challenges include a dearth of needed input resources, hostility in the business domain, unavailable skilled labor, etc. (Liu, et al, 2022). These challenges are appropriately handled by the firms that are able to stay afloat in the midst of challenging environment, attributing their success to the level of Organizational Resilience, whoever, to ameliorate the level of abstraction associated with the measure of Organizational Resilience, Chen, Xie & Lu (2021) deconstructed Organizational Resilience into its constituent components, asserting that Organizational Resilience is made up of five principal dimensions which are Capital Resilience, Strategic Resilience, Cultural Resilience, Relationship Resilience, and Learning Resilience. Chen, Xie & Lu (2021) asserted that for Organizations to attain resilience these aspects of Organizational Resilience must be effectively considered. This paper aims to establish the usefulness of Relationship Resilience in tackling the challenges faced within the manufacturing industry.

According to Nassereddine & Wehbe (2018), the manufacturing industry is facing several challenges and requires ways to improve its processes and enhance production without incurring more costs. These challenges have inhibited the performance of many firms in the industry, challenging them on all fronts. For instance, Garg et al (2014) asserted that global competition has forced many firms in the manufacturing industry to search for strategies that will help them enhance efficiency and be more competitive both at the local and international stages. As a result of the desire to enhance performance in the manufacturing

industry, firms are adopting the lean philosophy in a bid to enjoy the benefits that it portends, which still has not yielded as much benefits as anticipated, as shown in the study of Akpan et al (2022), asserting the inability of most manufacturing firms to cope with the dynamic and turbulent market conditions which has led to the collapse of many firms while others have managed to weather the storm and continued business in the face of the challenges. In a bid to minimize the mortality rate of firms within the industry, it becomes important to investigate the processes that the existing and thriving firms adopt to remain in business, especially in Nigeria where several manufacturing firms have folded up owing to adverse business conditions. As at the time of the paper, companies such as ShopRite, Procter & Gamble, Surest Foam Limited, Mufex, Framan Industries, MZM Continental, Nipol Industries, Moak Industries, Deli Foods, GSK, and Stone Industries, among others, have shut down fully or partially in the past five years. Given the importance of the manufacturing industry and its contribution to economic development, it is pertinent to understand the challenges within the industry and postulate tenable models that help organizations within the industry build resilience (Relationship Resilience) to minimize corporate mortality within the industry. This knowledge will strengthen firms against the market forces that disrupt productivity as shown in the study of Annarelli et al (2020).

Purpose of the study

- ☐ To evaluate the relevance of relationship resilience in overcoming disruptions in the business environment.
- ☐ To ascertain the usefulness of relationship resilience in enhancing reciprocal relationship.
- ☐ To measure the impact of relationship resilience in enhancing value creation

Literature review

Globally, organizations are more exposed to threats and vulnerabilities and are experiencing disruptive challenges and changes. Global conditions like Geopolitical tensions that hinder international trade, post-COVID supply chain disruptions, climate changes, technological advancement in automation and artificial intelligence, and volatility in the price of critical commodities pose a significant threat to business and necessitate the need for organizations to begin to look into how best to maintain balance, survive, and achieve its strategic goals and objectives (Becker, Ng, McEvoy & Mullett, 2016)

PwC Global Crisis and Resilience Survey (2023) reveals that in 2019, 69% of organizations had experienced a disruption in the last five years, and in 2023, 96% had experienced disruptions in the last two years. Disruptions are on the rise, and while a significant disruption was the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey also reveals that 91% have experienced disruptions other than the pandemic. There has been increased attention is on the study of threats and changes affecting and disrupting Organizations in the recent past. Fred & Luca (2024) looked at the multifaceted nature of disruptions and, building on previous research, classified disruptions into regulatory, technological, and business model disruptions, then added a classification they termed social disruption. This addition highlighted the importance of relational models to business productivity and profitability, they showed that some level of disruption could be appropriately handled and the adverse effect mitigated if the relationship between the stage holders where properly channeled and resources allotted in ways that needs of each stakeholder groups were well addressed. This further highlighted the role of leadership in enhancing Relationship resilience in Organizations. This thought tallied with the study by Xufan et al (2021) where it was posited that leaders play a critical role in developing an organization's resilience, and different kinds of leaders respond differently to challenges. Showing that influential leaders are a vital part of the success of any organization, helping to appropriately coordinate all sections of stakeholder and allotment of resources, which speaks directly to Relationship Resilience.

Definitions and overview of Relationship Resilience

Relationship Resilience evaluates Organizational Resilience in terms of an organization's relationship with all stakeholders, and how it manages that relationship on different levels. It looks at emotional connection, reciprocal relationships, customer service, and enhancement. Simply put, relationship resilience is the reciprocal relationship between businesses and their stakeholders, such as customers, investors, and employees (Borekci et al, 2014). Chen et al (2021) defined Relationship resilience as the reciprocal relationship between an organization and its stakeholders. It looks at reciprocal relationship and relationship enhancement, customer service and emotional connection.

At the individual level of Resilience, relationship resilience is an individual's ability to maintain and nurture relationships during challenges. It looks at cognitive, emotional, and behavioral factors that allow individuals to sustain supportive and meaningful relationships despite disruptions. It is the capacity to maintain and improve interpersonal relationships during disruptive times. It focuses on conflict management, preservation of emotional ties, and mutual support to navigate disruption. McAllister & McKinnon (2009), describe relationship resilience as a process that can be developed with deliberate actions and behaviour, not a fixed trait within individuals.

At the organizational level, relationship resilience is the ability of an organization to sustain and nurture its relationships with stakeholders during disruptions. This is key in helping organizations navigate disruptions

by maximizing the trust and support of stakeholders. Relationship resilience is the capacity to grow and maintain relationships with stakeholders, like investors, community, customers, and employees in the face of disruptions. Relationship resilience is not only focused on the maintenance of existing relationships but also on maximizing these relationships to achieve organizational goals during disruptions. Chen, Xie, & Liu (2021) proposed that reciprocal relationships between businesses and stakeholders are crucial for organizational resilience, especially during challenges. Relationship resilience draws from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which asserts that relationships are developed on reciprocal exchanges of benefits and resources. This suggests that organizations that build strong, reciprocal relationships with stakeholders receive loyalty and support in return, particularly during disruptive times. The stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) posits that organizations should respect and consider stakeholder well-being and preferences when making decisions to improve relationship resilience.

Characteristics of Relationship Resilience

Reciprocal Relationships

These relationships are marked by the exchange of support, where both sides profit from the relationship. Organizations in reciprocal relationships with stakeholders manage disruptions better (Chen et al, 2021). Companies that share revenue among all stakeholders promote loyalty and mutual support, which is critical during challenges. Reivich & Shatté (2003) suggest that organizations that embrace a collective approach to relationships are more likely to manage disruptions better. Dryden (2001) adds that adaptable emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses are critical for resilience, reinforcing the need for flexibility in sustaining reciprocal relationships.

Stakeholder Value Creation

A key aspect of relationship resilience is creating value for stakeholders. For organizations to develop resilient relationships, providing value for stakeholders is key. The value created is not just financial but can offer other forms of value like recognition, growth opportunities and emotional support. Managing relationships helps organizations create value for stakeholders and help companies during disruptions (Chen et al, 2021). Werner & Smith (2001) research on high-risk children, emphasized the importance of supportive relationships by showing that individuals with strong and supportive social networks receive support. Organizations that also give value to their stakeholders receive support and loyalty in return, improving their chances of managing disruptions.

Mutual Trust and Commitment

Mutual trust and commitment are central to relationship resilience. Trust means believing in the integrity and reliability of others. Commitment is the devotion to preserving and maintaining relationships. Organizations that foster trust and commitment with stakeholders easily navigate crises successfully. The role of commitment was identified by Maddi et al (1987) as an attitude that enables individuals to flourish during changes. When commitment is applied to organizational relationships, it is an interest in investing effort and time in developing stakeholder connections. Trust is identified by Grotberg (1999) as a major factor in developing resilience, as it builds a sense of predictability and safety in relationships. Organizational relationships can be expressed in different contexts, such as stakeholder relationships, community partnerships, professional networks, and cross-cultural networks

Recent studies (e.g. Chen et al, 2021) provide valuable insights into the dynamics of relationship resilience. These studies explore various contexts, including business-stakeholder relationships, community partnerships, professional networks, and cross-cultural contexts, to understand the contributing factors to resilience. The different contexts, prioritize different aspects of the relationship. Business-stakeholder relationships prioritize open communication and collective goals. Community partnerships priorities collaboration and mutual support. Professional networks prioritize individual and relational factors. Cross-cultural contexts prioritize interdependence and collective support. The strategies to Enhancing Relationship Resilience are;

Promoting Reciprocal Relationships

Building Trust and Commitment

Enhancing Stakeholder Value Creation

Developing Conflict Resolution Skills

Relationship resilience is multidimensional and encompasses commitment, reciprocal relationships, mutual trust, and stakeholder value creation. Improving relationships means promoting reciprocal relationships, building trust and commitment, enhancing stakeholder value creation, and developing conflict resolution skills.

Methodology

The aim is to measure the perception of relevant stakeholders on effect of Relationship Resilience on Organizational Performance in the Nigerian Manufacturing industry, hence the suitability of the survey design. Creswell (2018) showed that the eligibility of respondents needs to be critically evaluated so that the

responses elicited would create an objective pathway to drawing inferences that can be uncovered. In line with this, the research, considering the level of information needed, opted for samples to be made up of stakeholders in the industry, who would have access to relevant information on the subject matter. Given that the Manufacturing industry is made up of various firms, the survey adopted the cross-sectional survey design to have a representative sample for the study. In line with predominantly adopted data collection in the field of study, which provides a means of adequately and efficiently eliciting needed information on the subject matter, the study adopted the use of a structured questionnaire for measuring Relationship Resilience. The study adopted the online approach of administering the data. This process helped to ensure that the information provided was supplied by the intended respondent (not delegated to other officers) and provided a platform for the researcher to ask relevant questions that could provide contextual background for the study (McLafferty, 2016). The study population constituted all firms in the industry, distributed across Nigeria. However, since Organizational perspective is required for the construct under discourse, only employees who are middle level managers to Senior Managers are expected to have the requisite information. This further streamlined the population sample to all middle and senior level managers in all Manufacturing firms across the industry.

The research leverage on the understanding of organizational cadre and level of responsibilities assigned to each position to categorize the categorize employees to take part in the survey into lower, middle and senior managerial groups. However, some of the firms organogram did not clearly fit into the classification, in such instances the study aimed to enlist the top 2 levels in the organizations, knowing that personnel at such levels in the organization would need to make decision on behalf of their firms, hence should have organizational perspectives. On the average, most of the respondents that made up the sample were in the middle or senior managerial level in their firms. In order to have a representative sample, the study aimed to adopt the probabilistic approach to sampling, with the intention to deploy the proportional sampling methods, which according to Alvi (2016) showed that it involved the division of the entire population into distinguishable strata and respondents are selected based on the number of eligible respondent in each of the strata. However, due to several failure to get randomly selected firms to participate in the study, the researcher relied on the use of the non-probabilistic approach for sample selection which broadly fall under Purposive and convenience sampling methods.

The study focused on the use of primary data collected through the administered research instrument. The questionnaire was designed to measure key constructs needed to test the formulated hypotheses; these constructs were presented as different sections of the instrument. Section A elicited the personal information/demographics of the respondents. Section B contained items on Relationship Resilience as captured in the study of Chen, Xie & Liu (2021). The questionnaire is made up of a Seven-point Likert scale (1 – Complete Disagreement, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Somewhat Disagree, 4 – Either Agree or Disagree 5 – Somewhat Agree, 6 – Agree, 7 – Strong Agreement), adapted from the work of Chen, Liu & Xie (2021), it was designed to elicit inputs from respondents, showing the level of agreements and disagreement with the statements.

Analysis of data

In order to establish the significance of the Relationship resilience to the dimension of Organizational Performance, the one-sample T-test was adopted, which statistically compares the data with the benchmark for significance on performance. A total of 11 firms were sample for the study, resulting in a sample size of 156. the data was analyzed using SPSS 24.0 version.

Table 1: Gender of respondent

	Frequency	Percent
Male	104	66.7
Female	52	33.3
Total	156	100.0

Source: Author, 2024.

At the end of the screening and editing of data collected, the sample size for the study was 156. The sample was made up of 104 male respondents (66.7%) and 52 females (33.3%). The data significantly reflects the industry as a male dominated industry in line with other studies, however, it is important to capture the perspective of the women in the industry as their contribution would provide significant gender balance, especially in the world of growing female participation in the global space. The inclusion of the proportion of women in the study helps to eliminate the tendency of the outcome being gender biased.

Table 2: Highest Educational Qualification

	Frequency	Percent
OND / HND	39	25.0
Bachelor's degree	76	48.5

Master's degree	18	11.3
MBA	22	14.1
Ph.D	2	1.1
Total	156	100.0

Source: Author, 2024.

Given that people's worldview can be interpreted through various lenses, it becomes important to be mindful of the role of formal education in shaping individual perspective and mindset. As result, the study could be biased to consider the perspective of people who are educationally tilted in the same direction. To mitigate the instances of such bias, the study elicited responses to measure the level of educational qualification of the sample, by so doing, would be able to establish if the general opinion and outcome of the study was reflecting the perspective of the educationally elite alone. On collation of the collected data, it was observed that the level of education captured in the sample ranged from OND to Doctorate level, covering the entire spectrum of formal education, this representation helps to ameliorate the possibility of the outcome being that of any given educational sect. However, it was observed that the respondents with Bachelor's degree constituted the major proportion of the sample, being 48.5%, which was closely followed by the group of respondents who had either OND or HND qualification, accounting for 25% of the sample. The master's degree holders represented 11.3%, the MBA holders made up 14.1% while the remaining 1.1% of the sample were PhD holders. The distribution across the different educational categories enhances the objectivity of the outcomes of the study

Table 3 Managerial Level of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Executive Management	29	18.6
	Senior Management	54	34.6
	Middle Management	73	46.8
	Total	156	100.0

Source: Author, 2024.

Having established that the study seeks to elicit organizational perspectives of the constructs, the researcher aimed at having employees that fall within three broad categories respond to the questionnaire. The three broad categories are; Executive Management, Senior management and Middle management. However, in order to ascertain that the instrument was effectively distributed across the three categories, the table above was collated and showed that majority of the respondents, being 46.8% of the sample were in the middle management cadre, while 34.6% belonged to the Senior Management level and the remaining 18.6% of the sample were made up of the Executive management level. Hypothetically, it would have been desirable to have more respondents from the Executive management group, however, in actual instances, the proportion of the employees decline as we go up the organizational ladder, combined with the very busy schedule, hence it is understandable to have fewer responses at higher organizational levels. Notwithstanding, the study being able to access respondents at the various levels in the organization ensures that the resultant perspective captures the mindset of the organization.

In a bid to achieve the objective of the study, the one-sample test was carried out, to measure the effect of Relationship Resilience on selected dimensions of Organizational performance. The associated Research questions from the objectives is shown below and tested using the aforementioned statistical tool.

RQ 1: Does the use of Relationship Resilience help to overcome disruptions in the business environment.

in order to objectively answer this question, three (3) items in the questionnaire elicited responses to evaluate the relevance of Relationship Resilience in overcoming disruption, on the average, the descriptive distribution of the responses is presented in the table below;

Table 4: Relationship management is a vital tool for our company during disruptions

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Complete Disagreement	2	1.3	1.3	1.3
	Somewhat Disagree	6	3.8	3.8	5.1
	Disagree	3	1.9	1.9	7.1
	Either Agree or Disagree	9	5.8	5.8	12.8
	Somewhat Agree	68	43.6	43.6	56.4
	Agree	26	16.7	16.7	73.1

Strong Agreement	42	26.9	26.9	100.0
Total	156	100.0	100.0	

The above table showed that approximately 83% of the respondents were of the opinion that their organizational deploy the use of Relationship Resilience as a means of averting the adverse impact that disruption could have on their business while only 7.1% stated that Relationship Resilience is not necessarily useful when the company faces disruption. To statistical ascertain if the level of relevance is significant, the one-sample test was deployed and the result shown below;

Table 5: One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Relationship management is a vital tool for our company during disruptions	156	5.44	1.321	.106

This table showed that a total of 156 respondents provided their perspective to the question, which resulted in a relevance mean score of 5.44 with standard deviation of 1.32.

Table 6: One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 3.5					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Relationship management is a vital tool for our company during disruptions	18.364	155	.000	1.942	1.73	2.15

Based on the outcome of the one-sample t-test, it is observed that the p-value of the analysis is 0.000, which is less than 0.05 level of significance at which the test was carried out. According to statistical rule, this leads to accepting the alternative hypothesis, indicating that Relationship Resilience significantly helps organizations to overcome disruptions in the business environment

RQ 2: Does Relationship resilience enhance Reciprocal Relationship needed to aid Organizational Performance

The distribution of responses on the research question is presented in the table below;

Table 7: Relationship Resilience is pertinent to building Reciprocal relationship

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Complete Disagreement	4	2.6	2.6	2.6
Somewhat Disagree	2	1.3	1.3	3.8
Disagree	4	2.6	2.6	6.4
Either Agree or Disagree	12	7.7	7.7	14.1
Somewhat Agree	78	50.0	50.0	64.1
Agree	26	16.7	16.7	80.8
Strong Agreement	30	19.2	19.2	100.0
Total	156	100.0	100.0	

On the average, about 85% of the sample asserted that Relationship Resilience is a necessary requirement for building Reciprocal relationship needed for Organizational Performance, however, the sample was still made up of 6.4% who did not consider Relationship Resilience as a requirement for building Reciprocal Relationships. The average distribution of the responses is shown below;

Table 8: One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Relationship Resilience is pertinent to building Reciprocal relationship	156	5.28	1.254	.100

The average score of the sample on the importance of Relationship Resilience in building reciprocal relationship was 5.28 with standard deviation of 1.25. in order to measure if the average score connotes statistical significance, the one-sample t-test score is presented below

Table 9: One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 3.5					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Interval Difference	Confidence of the
					Lower	Upper
Relationship Resilience is pertinent to building Reciprocal relationship	17.755	155	.000	1.782	1.58	1.98

Using the p-value as the basis for decision making, it was observed that the analysis had a p-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance, hence the conclusion that Relationship Resilience is relevant for building Reciprocal relationship in Organizations

RQ 3: Does Relationship resilience enhance value creation during disruptions

Using the items measuring relevance of Relationship resilience to value creation, the distribution of responses from the sample was generated and presented in the table below;

Table 10: Relevance of Relationship Resilience to value creation during disruption

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Complete Disagreement	5	3.2	3.2	3.2
Somewhat Disagree	9	5.8	5.8	9.0
Disagree	15	9.6	9.6	18.6
Valid Either Agree or Disagree	31	19.9	19.9	38.5
Somewhat Agree	50	32.1	32.1	70.5
Agree	30	19.2	19.2	89.7
Strong Agreement	16	10.3	10.3	100.0
Total	156	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows that approximately 62% of the respondents were of the opinion that relationship resilience enhances value creation during disruption, however, 18.6% of the sample had a contrary opinion, stating that relationship resilience does not enhance value creation during disruption. The mean score for relevance of Relationship resilience to value creation was computed and presented in the table below;

Table 11: One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Relevance of Relationship Resilience to value creation during disruption	156	4.71	1.464	.117

On the average, the mean score for relevance of Relationship Resilience to value creation was 4.71 with standard deviation of 1.46. to statistically test for significance, the one-sample t-test was carried out and presented below;

Table 12: One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 3.5					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Relevance of Relationship Resilience to value creation during disruption	10.278	155	.000	1.205	.97	1.44

Based on the above table, it is observed that the p-value is less than 0.05, indicating that Relationship Resilience is pertinent to value creation during disruption.

Conclusion

The result of the study significantly buttresses ideas postulated in literature in several ways. Principally, the outcome asserts that the propounded relationship between Organizational Resilience and Organizational Performance holds true (Schaedler et al, 2022). showing that deliberate actions taken by organization during crisis can serve as a profitable means of sustaining productivity during disruption, as stated by McAllister & McKinnon (2009). this paper establishes the pertinent role that proper identification with all stakeholder in an organization plays when business environment becomes turbulent, it such times, apart from adjusting other performance dimension, proper relationship management becomes an additional viable option, showing that it aids value creation and reciprocal relationship needed to drive performance

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