

# EMPLOYEE RESILIENCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE IN VIETNAM TOURISM BUSINESS

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## Abstract

Scholars have acknowledged the importance of human resource management practices in developing organizational resilience regarding long-term planning and adopting an operational perspective. However, there is little understanding of the individual and contextual factors fostering organizational resilience. The paper explored the relationships between employee resilience (cognitive, behavioural, and contextual) and organizational resilience (planned and adaptive). Data were collected from 202 employees in Vietnamese small and medium-sized tourism businesses and analyzed using structural equation modelling techniques. The results have identified the cognitive and behavioral employee resilience effect of organisation resilience, including planned and adaptive. The study suggests developing organizational resilience, focusing on cognitive and behavioral resilience in response to the crisis.

**Keywords:** *cognitive resilience, behavioral resilience, contextual resilience, organizational resilience, tourism business*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is considered a highly vulnerable industry; however, it can adapt to sudden and continuous changes in the environment (Hall et al., 2017), due to that tourism could recover after various crises and disasters (Novelli et al., 2018). Organizational resilience has emerged as an important concept in disaster management literature (McManus et al., 2008). However, the impact of the global COVID-19 crisis on the tourism industry is profound and ongoing (Ntounis et al., 2022; Sigala, 2020). Some destinations turned to more local and sustainable forms of tourism and others returned to business as usual (Hall et al., 2020). Resilience and building resilience have emerged as a way for the tourism industry to survive the negative impacts of COVID-19 (Hall et al., 2020; Lew et al., 2020; Ntounis et al., 2022; Prayag et al., 2020). Using an instrument developed to measure organizational resilience quantitatively, Lee et al. (2013) identified two dimensions of resilience: Planned and Adaptive. Planned resilience includes using pre-determined, existing planning capabilities, such as risk management and business continuity initiatives. Adaptive resilience emerges in times of crisis through strong leadership and culture. This allows organizations to respond to emergency situations flexibly (Lee et al., 2013). The need to understand organizational resilience within and across sectors is critical to building resilient communities (McManus et al., 2008).

Employee resilience is the key to engaged employees and creating a learning organization that builds organizational resilience. This implies that employees play a central role in organizational resilience. However, the way in which employees strengthen organizational resilience has long been a black box. There is little understanding of the individual and contextual factors fostering organizational resilience (Nguyen et al., 2016). Thus, the main objective of this study is to evaluate the role of resilient employees with respect to the resilience of tourism organizations after COVID-19. We developed and tested a conceptual model for the tourism business in Vietnam.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND / LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Organizational Resilience and Tourism

There are diverse definitions of organizational resilience exist (Hillmann & Guenther, 2021; Prayag et al., 2023), tourism studies commonly focus on two interdependent dimensions— planned and adaptive resilience (Orchiston et al., 2016; Prayag et al., 2018). Resilient organizations prepare for and effectively respond to disruptions (Orchiston et al., 2016; Su et al., 2021). Effective crisis and disaster management hinges on planning and preparing before the event (Ritchie, 2004). Grounded in business continuity management, resilience planning involves both organizations and destinations preparing for crises and

disasters and is vital for reducing the impacts of and improving recovery from disasters (Lee et al., 2013; Mair et al., 2016). Therefore, developing organizational strategies can help organizations and destinations avoid or limit the severity of rapid change induced by crises or disasters (Ritchie, 2004). Although organizations can develop precrisis strategies to help with crisis management, they are often unable to prevent a crisis from occurring; thus, their adaptive capacity and ability to implement coping strategies to limit damage becomes critical (Ritchie, 2004). Adaptive resilience refers to the need for coping strategies to deal with negative impacts in the short term and engage in successful recovery activities in the medium to longer term. Therefore, adaptive resilience is the ability to respond effectively, recover quickly, and renew successfully following an adverse event.

#### *Adaptive Organizational Resilience*

Current research on organizational adaptive resilience often takes an event-centered perspective by focusing on unexpected events that threaten organizations in surprising and disruptive ways (Williams et al., 2020). Over the past two years, responses and adaptations to the COVID-19 crisis have largely relied on an event-centric perspective (Kim et al., 2021). Tourism studies on organizational adaptive resilience often focus on the effectiveness of organizational speed (Orchiston et al., 2016; Prayag et al., 2020) or the ability to respond to a crisis current or recent crisis (Mair et al., 2016). For example, Wieczorek-Kosmala (2022) investigated the response of tourism organizations to disruptions arising from COVID-19 in Central European countries, finding that companies' resilience was based on Higher cash will adapt more successfully. Similarly, Kim et al. (2021) investigated the response of small restaurants to the severe financial impacts arising from the COVID-19 crisis in China, showing that resilience varied across regions and restaurant types.

#### *Planned Organizational Resilience*

There are a few tourism research focuses on forward-looking strategies beyond an event-centric perspective in building planned organizational resilience (Lee et al., 2013; Prayag et al., 2020). Williams et al. (2017) argue that companies should assume that disruptions or crises will continue and develop strategies to best respond to any period of adversity. In contrast, most tourism companies adopt a reactive approach, proactively preparing for future disruptions (Amore et al., 2018; Mair et al., 2016). Tourism scholars have examined how tourism organizations can proactively and strategically plan for potential disruptions (Ritchie, 2004; Ritchie & Jiang, 2019).

Therefore, understanding what organizations can do to prepare and how to recover from disasters and crises proactively is important to advance the literature on organizational resilience. However, while tourism-related research on adaptive organizational resilience is abundant, a recent literature review by Ritchie and Jiang (2019) shows that research on resilience. According to planning and strategic preparation is still scarce. Perhaps one reason for this lack of research is that it is conducted over long periods of time, and it is difficult to measure long-term effects (Mair et al., 2016; Ortiz-de-Mandojana & Bansal, 2016). In summary, while planned and adaptive resilience and their respective practices are critical to achieving organizational resilience, only a few pseudo-studies (Fang et al., 2020; Prayag et al., 2018) identified the connection between them. Research by Chowdhury et al. (2019) is limited to the impact of adaptive resilience on tourism organization performance during the post-earthquake recovery period, while Li et al. (2021) analyzed the relationship between emergency and recovery responses to COVID-19 and the planned and adaptive resilience of companies.

## **2.2. Employee Resilience and Organizational Resilience**

Employee resilience is the key to engaged employees and creating a learning organization that builds organizational resilience Malik and Garg (2020). This implies that employees play a central role in organizational resilience. By responding positively to adversity and maintaining their performance, despite the stressful experience in the workplace (Bardoel et al., 2014; Liang & Cao, 2021; Santoro et al., 2021), employees can strengthen organizational resilience. Thus, the importance of HRM practices in developing organizational resilience in terms of long-term planning and adopting an operational perspective was acknowledged by many scholars (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011). According to Prayag et al. (2020), psychological and employee resilience contribute to the enhancement of organizational resilience in the

tourist industry's post-disaster recuperation. Teng-Calleja et al. (2020) claim that workplace resilience-building programs boost employee resilience, which contributes to organizational resilience. Liang and Cao (2021) discovered an indirect association between employees and organizational resilience via employee coping methods.

Santoro et al. (2021) found limited empirical data on the impact of employee resilience's cognitive, behavioral, and contextual characteristics on organizational resilience. Since employee behaviours are embedded in each dimension, we argue that a stronger understanding of resilience behaviours can enhance organizational resilience. Employees who have a greater sense of purpose and believe in the organization's mission, for example, can engage in problem-solving and innovation more successfully, improving the organization's ability to adapt to possible challenges (Santoro et al., 2021).

Cognitive resilience refers to employees having a positive view of adversity in the workplace (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011; Santoro et al., 2021). To foster this, organizations should encourage employees to be decisive despite uncertainty, recognise opportunities in the business environment, question fundamental assumptions about conducting business in uncertain times, and use creativity to identify novel solutions to complex problems (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011). Therefore, employees who demonstrate these resilience behaviors can contribute to building organizational resilience. Boosting such employee behaviours requires reinforcing the organization's core values and culture to instil a strong sense of purpose among employees in using their expertise to navigate challenging environments (Santoro et al., 2021). Resilience can be enhanced by encouraging employee creativity and innovation (Nilakant et al., 2014) and the organization's learning capabilities (Muskat et al., 2021). Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Cognitive employee resilience has a positive effect on adaptive organizational resilience

H2: Cognitive employee resilience has a positive effect on planned organizational resilience

The behavioral dimension of employee resilience focuses on resourcefulness and paradoxical agility, as well as valuable habits and behavioral readiness. Enhancing organizational resilience requires these actions. According to Lennick-Hall et al. (2011), managers may cultivate these traits by establishing an environment that encourages transparent communication and teamwork and rewarding staff members who share expertise. Employees who share knowledge, ideas, and information with others in order to inspire creativity and enhance goods and processes can boost organizational resilience (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011). Kuntz et al. (2017) have suggested that fostering psychological resilience and reflective practices in the workplace can enhance employee resilience and aid companies in overcoming adversity. Furthermore, regular and overlearned procedures might help employees respond to unforeseen hazards (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011). Organizational resilience can be strengthened by actions that represent the behavioral dimension of employee resilience. Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

H3: Behavioral employee resilience has a positive effect on adaptive organizational resilience.

H4: Behavioral employee resilience has a positive effect on planned organizational resilience.

The ability of employees to rely on and leverage relationships within and outside the organization at difficult times is a key aspect of the contextual dimension of employee resilience (Santoro et al., 2021). The stronger the external organizational relationships are, the easier it is for employees to access resources, knowledge, and information that support mitigation and response strategies following disruptive events (Chowdhury et al., 2019). The contextual conditions for organizations to reap the benefits from such relationships include psychological safety, deep social capital, diffuse power and accountability within relationships, and broad resource networks across the organization (Lengnick-Hall & Beck, 2005). These contextual conditions depend on organizational practices that facilitate, support, and enhance employees' capacity to collaborate with others. For example, a climate of psychological safety is established when the work environment is conducive to employees taking interpersonal risks. However, the work environment may also hinder employees from asking for help, admitting mistakes, and experimenting (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011). Therefore, internal and external relationships are stronger in an environment of psychological safety. External relationships built on honesty, reciprocity, and trust have enhanced organizational resilience among tourism firms (Chowdhury et al., 2019). Thus, the more employees leverage relationships

to access information, knowledge, and resources, the more they can strengthen organizational resilience. Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

H5: Contextual employee resilience has a positive effect on adaptive organizational resilience.

H6: Contextual employee resilience has a positive effect on planned organizational resilience.

In summary, the literature reveals that organisational resilience, whether transformational or resilient is critical in developing and nurturing employee capabilities (Giustiniano et al., 2020; Santoro et al., 2021). However, the way in which employees strengthen organizational resilience has long been a black box (Liang & Cao, 2021). Little is known about how employee resilience in the tourism sector affects organisational resilience. However, in most of the extant tourism literature, organizational resilience is mostly discussed from the perspective of adaptive resilience (Chowdhury et al., 2019; Mair et al., 2016; Wieczorek-Kosmala, 2022). Moreover, the employee resilience–organizational resilience nexus remains underexplored. Figure 1 encapsulates the concepts and hypotheses proposed in this study, showing how resilient employee influences organizational resilience.

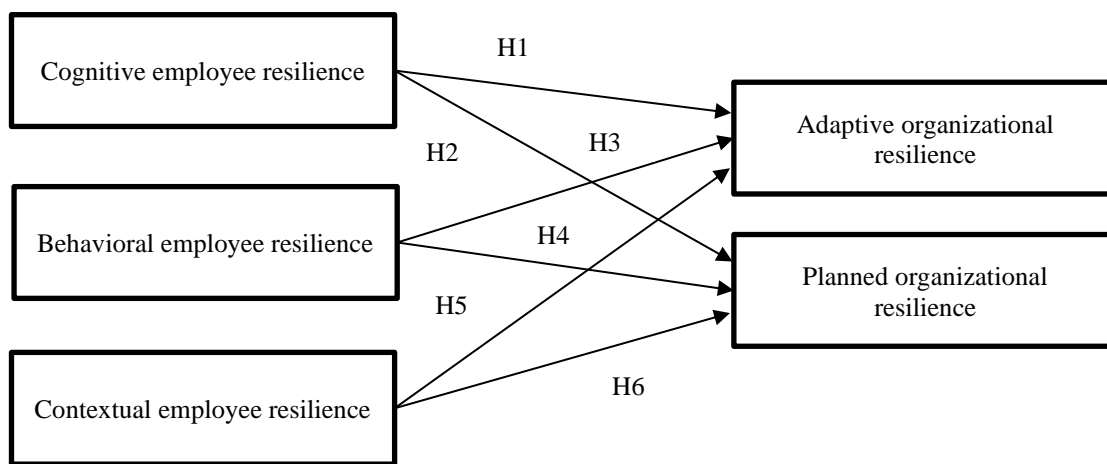


Fig. 1 – The concepts and hypotheses proposed.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research context

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely constrained the tourism industry in Vietnam (Su et al., 2021). While the number of COVID-19 cases was low, the impact on the Vietnamese tourism and hospitality industry was devastating, due to border closures, travel restrictions and the lockdown. There was a recorded 98% fall in visitors in April, compared with 2019 (Reuters, 2020) and the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism estimated a loss of around US\$5.9–7.7 billion over the three months from February to April (The World and Vietnam, 2020).

#### 3.2. Research instrument

An online survey comprising various sections was designed for data collection and administered via Google Forms. The first section captured the respondent's characteristics (age, gender, and education level) and the organization (size, tourism industry sector, and duration of operation). The remaining sections captured information on the two constructs—employee and organizational resilience—using 5-point scales adapted from previous studies (1=strongly disagree;5=strongly agree). Employee resilience was measured using a multidimensional scale comprising 14 items ( $\alpha=.941$ ) adapted from Prayag et al. (2023). Of the 14 items, six measured the cognitive dimension, five measured the behavioral dimension, and three measured the contextual dimension of employee resilience represent Santoro et al. (2021). Organizational resilience was measured using 13 items ( $\alpha=.930$ ) adapted from Orchiston et al. (2016) and Prayag et al. (2020), representing the two dimensions of planned and adaptive resilience (A. V. Lee et al., 2013). Respondents' perceptions of the impact of COVID-19 on business performance were captured using a 5-point Likert scale

(1=not at all;5=very much) using an overall perception assessment adapted from Prayag et al. (2018) and Sigala (2020).

Tab. 1 - Measurements

Items
<b>Cognitive employee resilience</b> (Prayag et al., 2023)
Use expert advice to deal with the challenges
Be creative in the response to the crisis
Be decisive despite the uncertainty surrounding the situation
Be questioning the fundamental assumptions of how to run the business
Coming up with solutions that are novel and appropriate
<b>Behavioral employee resilience</b> (Prayag et al., 2023)
Devise unconventional, yet robust responses to this unprecedented challenge
Combine originality and initiative to capitalize on the immediate situation
Practice repetitive, over-learned routines that provide the first response to any unexpected threat
<b>Contextual employee resilience</b> (Prayag et al., 2023)
Develop interpersonal connections and resource supply lines that lead to the ability to act quickly
Share information and knowledge widely
Share power and accountability
<b>Planned resilience</b> (Orchiston et al., 2016; Prayag et al., 2023)
Given how others depends on us, the way we plan for the unexpected in this business is appropriate
This business is committed to practicing and testing emergency plans to ensure that things run smoothly and effectively
We have a focus on being able to respond to the unexpected very quickly
We build relationship with others we might have to work with in a crisis or unexpected event
We have clearly defined priorities for what is important during and after a crisis or an unexpected event
We proactively monitor our industry to have warning of issues that can affect us
<b>Adaptive resilience</b> (Orchiston et al., 2016; Prayag et al., 2023)
People in our business are committed to working on a problem until it is resolved
Our business maintains sufficient resources to absorb some unexpected change
If key people were unavailable, there are always others who could fill their role
There is good leadership from within our business when we are struck by a crisis or unexpected event
We are known for our ability to use knowledge in novel ways We can make tough decisions quickly
There is good leadership from within our business when we are struck by a crisis or unexpected event

### 3.3. Data Collection

The study sample comprised all tourism organizations operating in Thua Thien Hue province, Vietnam, in 2023, irrespective of size or sector of operation. The unit of analysis in this study is the organization.

Respondents include individuals with leadership responsibilities, including owner-managers, CEOs (i.e., top managers), department heads and group managers (i.e., senior managers), supervisors of customer-facing staff (i.e., middle managers) and employees.

Data collection commenced at the beginning of May 2023 and lasted two months. Only one respondent from each organization was permitted to complete the survey. A convenience sample strategy was used, with research assistants distributing hard copies of the questionnaire to the listed tourism firms and collecting them after one week. A total of 202 questionnaires that were filled out were collected.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using PLS-SEM, a variance-based technique for route analysis. PLS-SEM is an alternative to the more traditional co-variance-based SEM (CB-SEM). Although, Valle and Assaker's (2016) recent review of PLS-SEM (2000–2014) in tourism revealed that fewer studies have employed this method compared to CB-SEM. The method's nature (more suited for exploratory research) and sample size requirements are the prime motivations behind using the technique in this study. PLS-SEM was used to evaluate the conceptual model for several reasons. First, it can generate robust findings for data with both normal and non-normal distributions (Hair et al., 2017). Second, PLS-SEM is appropriate when the research model has a large number of indicators, including second-order constructs. Third, PLS-SEM is appropriate for theory building and examining constructs that have yet to receive significant empirical attention (Hair et al., 2017) such as organizational responses to COVID-19. SmartPLS 3.3.3 (using 5,000 resamples) was used to test both the measurement (outer) and structural (inner) models.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. The measurement model

Testing the validity and reliability of the relationship between latent constructs and their related concepts is part of evaluating the measurement model (Hair et al., 2017). The measurement model was subject to convergent and discriminant validity checks, internal consistency reliability checks, and indicator reliability checks.

The results sample with 202 show that CR and Cronbach alpha for each construct was greater than 0.823, providing evidence of their internal consistency and reliability. For accepting convergent validity, the AVE of the construct should be more than 0.5. Table 2 exhibits that all constructs had an AVE between 0.645 and 0.787, demonstrating the acceptance of convergent validity of the latent constructs. Secondly, CR is greater than AVE, which also shows constructs of convergent validity.

Tab. 2 - Contrasts of reliability and validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Adaptive Resilience	0.839	0.843	0.893	0.678
Behavirol employee resilience	0.865	0.868	0.917	0.787
Cognitive employee resilience	0.823	0.827	0.894	0.739
Contextual employee resilience	0.859	0.872	0.913	0.779
Planned Reslience	0.921	0.924	0.936	0.645

The HTMT ratio was used for checking discriminant validity, and the value of HTMT ranged between 0.436 and 0.837, which indicates the acceptance of measurement model discriminant validity because all values were less than 0.90 (Henseler et al., 2009).

Tab. 3 - Discriminant validity using heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT)

	Adaptive Resilience	Behavirol employee resilience	Cognitive employee resilience	Contextual employee resilience	Planned Resilience
Adaptive Resilience					
Behavirol employee resilience	0.672				
Cognitive employee resilience	0.775	0.834			
Contextual employee resilience	0.612	0.779	0.760		
Planned Resilience	0.693	0.620	0.837	0.436	

**4.2. The structural model and hypotheses test**

After testing the model, it was found that the construct met reliability and validity. Bootstrapping methods with 5000 re-sampling methods as suggested by Hair et al. (2017) were used in this study to evaluate the structural model by assessing the path coefficients concerning the model's latent variables through the path coefficient's sign, magnitude, and significance. Tab. 4 and Fig. 2 show the result of 6 hypotheses and the significance of direct effect was measured through T values (with t value > 1.96, the test is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval) and found that the hypothesis H1,H2, H3, H4 were accepted, and H5, H6 was rejected.

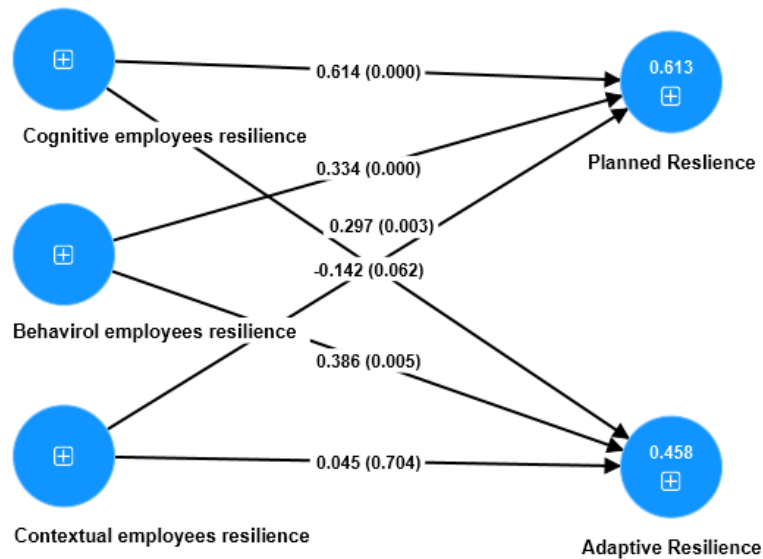


Fig. 2 - Measurement model

Tab. 4 - Direct Paths and Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Hypothesis result
H3	Behavioral employee resilience -> Adaptive Resilience	0.386	0.381	0.137	2.821	0.005	Supported
H4	Behavioral employee resilience -> Planned Resilience	0.334	0.336	0.078	4.256	0.000	Supported
H1	Cognitive employee resilience -> Adaptive Resilience	0.297	0.298	0.101	2.947	0.003	Supported
H2	Cognitive employee resilience -> Planned Resilience	0.614	0.614	0.074	8.313	0.000	Supported
H5	Contextual employee resilience -> Adaptive Resilience	0.045	0.049	0.118	0.381	0.704	Not Supported
H6	Contextual employee resilience -> Planned Resilience	-0.142	-0.145	0.076	1.869	0.062	Not Supported

The results of the measurement model have shown the importance of cognitive and behavioral employee resilience effect on organization resilience including planned and adaptive.

Firstly, cognitive employee resilience had a significant influence on Adaptive Resilience ( $\beta = 0.297$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ) and behavioral employee resilience had a significant influence on Adaptive Resilience ( $\beta = 0.386$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ). The value of R square was 0.458 which means that 45.8% variance of Adaptive Resilience was explained by cognitive employee resilience and behavioral employee resilience.

Secondly, cognitive employee resilience had a significant influence on Planned Resilience ( $\beta = 0.614$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ) and behavioral employee resilience had a significant influence on Planned Resilience ( $\beta = 0.334$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ). The value of R square was 0.613 which means that 61.3% variance of Planned Resilience was explained by cognitive employee resilience and behavioral employee resilience.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The results show that the specific resilience behaviors of employees can strengthen organizational resilience, supporting H1, H2, H3, and H4. Specifically, cognitive and behavioural employee resilience strengthens both planned and adaptive resilience. This implies that fostering a more positive orientation toward adversity (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011) among tourism organisations employees in the pandemic's early phases may have enhanced their problem-solving abilities, decisiveness, and engagement levels, enhancing organizational resilience. These behaviours are key indicators of adaptive resilience (Lee et al., 2013) and appear to reside in developing or strengthening the learning ability among employees in uncertain times like COVID-19. While the study of Prayag et al. (2023) shows that there is an influence of both Cognitive Behavioral and Contextual employee resilience on organizational resilience, the results of this study indicate that behavioral employee resilience affects both adaptive and planned resilience. Similar to cognitive employee resilience affecting organizational resilience ' dimensions, including adaptive and planned. No evidence has been found about the relationship between contextual employee resilience and organizational resilience in Vietnamese tourism businesses' data.

To build employees' cognitive resilience, we recommend adopting HRM practices that focus on continuous employee development and agile teamwork in response to crisis. This includes working across multiple functions to reduce the sense of isolation within the organization. Organizational resilience is enhanced when employees and teams can be quickly replaced with other employees and teams, a critical capability for organizations during COVID-19 when Team members become unwell. Group-based incentives (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011) can assist managers in decentralizing decision-making authority to groups of employees.

For behavioral employee resilience, managers should implement initiatives to improve employee well-being and work-life balance. These initiatives should have both face-to-face and online components because employees are increasingly working from home since the COVID-19 outbreak. Tourism firms had to navigate uncharted territory during the early stages of COVID-19; thus, reflective practices may enable the rapid identification of ineffective learning from change and boost organisational resilience (Lee et al., 2013).

## 6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study contributes to the literature on organizational resilience in the tourism sector in the context of COVID-19 by highlighting the role of employee resilience. The study expands on previous tourism literature by applying a multidimensional approach to employee resilience, which links employee resilience to employee resilience psychological recovery rather than using a one-dimensional measure of employee resilience.

However, this study has limitations that should be addressed in future studies. With the convenience sampling method applied, the results of this study are only related to the sample used. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to the entire Vietnamese tourism industry or all industries within it. To provide a deeper understanding of potential within-country differences, future scholars may want to consider regional and sectoral differences to enhance understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on the entire tourism industry.

Finally, this study aimed at improving the resilience capacity of tourism organizations in uncertain times. To further understand the different stages of recovery, researchers could undertake a comprehensive investigation of the different phases of crises and the development of organizational resilience over time using longitudinal methods.

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