

## SOCIAL RESILIENCE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK IN THE CONTEXT OF ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING IN RURAL AREAS: CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

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### Abstract

The article analyses the social resilience factors that influence the activity of organizations operating in rural regions. Revealing how the concept of social resilience becomes more and more important in modern society to create risk management factors within an organization. The article presents an analysis of social resilience, determines the theoretical principles and empirical results based on which the social resilience factors are planned. In order to identify the factors that are important for the assessment of the social resistance of organizations in rural areas, the research is the analysis of scientific literature. Based on the results of the research, the model of social resistance assessment of the organizations was formed.

**Purpose** – to identify the key factors in evaluating rural region organizations' social resilience through theoretical analysis.

**Design/methodology/approach** – systematic and logical analysis of organizational social resilience. In order to conceptually define the factors of organizational social resilience, a scientific literature analysis was carried out.

**Finding** – Scientific literature analysis allowed to identify key factors in evaluating rural region organizations' social resilience. A model for evaluating organizational social resilience factors was prepared.

**Research limitations/implications** – The constraint of the article is low attention given to economic resilience factors which literature describes as important in connection with social resilience.

**Practical implications** – The results of this research can be useful in strengthening social resilience in rural organizations.

**Originality/Value** – On the basis of the research results, the author of the article developed a model of social resistance assessment of organizations.

**Keywords:** social resilience, organizations, rural regions.

**Research type:** literature review.

### Introduction

The social changes taking place in a modern work, increasingly active processes of globalization, development of open market and developing technological processes motivate organizations operating in rural regions to look for new activity mechanisms, take on social responsibility, broaden collaboration, adaptivity and strengthen social resilience (Nijkamp and Kourtit 2013).

The question that has lately been raised frequently – why some organizations, after experiencing difficulties, crisis situations and unfavourable events are able to overcome

tension, maintain structure and continue functioning while others are unable to overcome the difficulties, they face substantiates the relevance of the article. The article presents answers to this question taking into consideration the fact that rural region organizations work in a closely connected and interactively difficult world where unexpectedness and unwanted events are frequently experienced in everyday situations (Rosset and Martínez-Torres, 2012). Organizational structures face upheavals such as decrease in social capital, loss of property rights, abrupt change in economic policy and others which directly influence the regions' ability to develop social resilience (Dawley, 2013). It is more and more frequently observed that social resilience theory provides understanding about how regions and organizations cope with misfortunes, tension and huge obstacles and how they adapt to the changing situation (Acemoglu et al, 2014).

Exploration of the topic – the activity of organizations in rural regions was explored by Andersson and Koster (2011); Baland, Rigby and Boschma (2014), organizational competitiveness in regions was investigated by Bristow, (2010), regional economic and social aspects were analysed by Bristow and Healey (2013) while structural changes and networking between regional organizations were researched by Huggins and Thompson (2014), Neffke, Hartog, Boschma and Henning (2014).

The theoretical and empirical perspectives of social resilience theory were analysed by Christopherson, Michie and Tyler (2010), Gilly, Kechidi and Talbot (2014), Martin, and Sunley (2013), resilience and adaptation were studied by Pike, Dawley, and Tomaney (2010).

Scientific problem – the problematics of rural regions is widely discussed in scientific sources. However, social resilience of organizations that seek effective activity results in unfavourable circumstances is quite a new phenomenon and not well studied.

### **Theoretical background: conception and factors of organizational social resilience**

Considering the peculiarities of organizations in rural regions, it is necessary to mention that these organizations face unfavourable circumstances, crisis situations and risk factors (Coombs, 2010) which may be mitigated by developing social resilience. Various researchers define the concept of social resilience differently. Luthar et al, (2000) notes that resilience is a dynamic process of positive adaptation to significantly unfavourable circumstances. The fact that resilience is a key factor of social resilience is supported by Chandra et al, (2010) who emphasizes that adaptation is invoked to reduce the negative impact of crises. Other authors (Cummings et al, 2000) claim that the main criterion of social resilience is risk factors which define the probability of negative consequences. Therefore, if there is no risk, there is no need to develop social resilience and on the contrary – the higher the risk, the higher the probability of impairments (Cummings et al, 2000). Meanwhile, Rudolph and Reppenning (2002) define resilience as positive adjustments in difficult conditions (mistakes, crises, upheavals, routine disruptions, constant risk, tension) in order for organizations to become stronger and more innovative after facing difficulties. Norris et al, (2008) observes that social resilience is organizations' and other social systems' ability to maintain balance between various elements in crises by focusing the available resources and competences, change, requirement and challenge management skills. Therefore, the main social resilience characteristics can be distinguished, which are the organization's or system's ability to react to negative impacts, and to adapt to changes.

With social resilience defined, it is important to analyse the factors and elements of rural region organizations which allow the organization to overcome unfavourable events. Social resilience in rural region organizations emerges due to the dynamic and processes which are flexible and easily formed in order for organizations to successfully overcome unexpected

situations (Magis, 2010). According to Simmie and Martin (2010), the region in which the organization operates needs to take problem solving into consideration as well because strengthening social resilience requires not only organization's but also region's ability to appropriately react to risks and crises. Depending on the region in which a crisis occurs, social resilience should be related to adaptivity because every location has different abilities to adapt to change. The research of abovementioned authors determined that attention should be focused on region's ability to strengthen social resilience factors by considering the economic, technological and environmental challenges. It is important to collaborate with organizations in the region when planning and implementing changes and to take into consideration their limits. The region's ability to cope with structural changes, create new ways to grow in order to compensate unwanted events and decline processes in its regional environment is the main foundation of resilience, as Swanstrom (2008) states. In addition, the author claims that no region can trust its past successes when looking to the future. In an evolutionary perspective, regions may be linked with the consensus between adaptivity and accessibility because organizations are dependent on their past and nature of activity while with the emerge of new types of activities, new organizations that satisfy a specific need emerge as well (Munari et al, 2012). Resilience is also dependent on the regional process, structures and practices which motivate the increase of competence of organizations, renew effectiveness and stimulate growth (Sutcliffe and Vogus, 2003). A resilient organization is a sustainable and willing organization because will is trust based on a realistic evaluation of challenges in the circumstances of a particular region. Resilient organizations tend to conduct self-analyses in order to verify expectations that are already met (Gittel et al, 2006).

Kimbi (2014) distinguished three levels of social resilience: individual, societal and national. It is important to understand what skills allow organizations to effectively function and seek for positive results in extreme situations. Other scientists (Chandra et al, 2013) reveal that in order to endure crisis situations and protect from extreme unwanted events, it is mandatory to distinguish the fundamental elements of social resilience: social and economic justice; common welfare; effective risk management; integration and communication between governmental and non-governmental organizations. The researchers state that these elements are the main leverages for strengthening social resilience (Chandra et al, 2013). Scientific studies define the following factors that stimulate social resilience: collaboration processes that allow to execute changes (Wolfe, 2010); organizational leaders' role where the main characters are managers and leaders that are able to execute changes in institutions (Bristow and Healey 2013); conceptualized organizations that are involved in complex feedback interactions with other institutions where changes and abilities to adapt take place on different levels and at different speeds (Williams et al, 2013). Boschma and Capone (2014) determined that regions can strengthen social resilience via the following actions: strengthening local resources or organizational skills; invoking the specialized knowledge base in order to diversify new activities by associating with other regions and organizations with strong knowledge base which can share their resources.

Scientific source analysis revealed that social resilience manifests through reacting to upheavals, adapting to changes and overcoming unfavourable situations. The main factors that stimulate social resilience are collaboration and communication, leaders' role in adapting to changes, local resources, knowledge base and skills of the organization, effective risk management.

### Research methodology

In order to conceptually define the factors of organizational social resilience, a scientific literature analysis was carried out. Search for publications was conducted in the academic literature search platform Google Scholar. The following keywords were searched: social resilience, organizational social resilience, rural organization social resilience. The period of search was set to the past five years. In the first stage of research, a total of 11 articles fully reflecting the research topic were selected. The second stage included the same keywords without applying a time frame in order to find better topicality for the research and distinguish authors who conduct the most research and are authorities on the topic. In this stage, 30 articles were selected for analysis.

The stage of article analysis clarified the organizational social resilience factors. Systematized research results are presented in tables. General research results are presented in the model for organizational social resilience factor evaluation (Fig. 1).

Methods: systematic and logical analysis of organizational social resilience.

### Results

Scientific literature analysis allowed to identify key factors in evaluating rural region organizations' social resilience. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Organizational social resilience factors**

No.	Social resilience factors	Author
1.	Structural, organizational factors; Proactive attitude; Organization's experience; Organizational skills; Adaptivity; Consensus between adaptivity and accessibility; Effectiveness; Effective risk management; Innovation; New ideas; Strategic changes; Change planning; Activity plan coordination with goals; Structural changes; Organizational culture; Organizational transparency; Trust; Reliability; Shared responsibility; Understanding of cause - consequence; Flexibility; Flexible processes; Chain action sequences; Ability to maintain balance; Dynamics; Self-analyses.	Zahner, S. J., 2005; Barca, F. et al, 2012; Oostindie, H. et al, 2010; Bolman, L.G. and Deal, T.E., 2008; Kitchen, L. Marsden, T., 2011; Wheelen, T. L., et al, 2015; Van der Ploeg J. D. and Schneider, S., 2015; Simmie, J. Martin, R., 2010; Swanstrom, T., 2008; Wolfe, D.A., 2010; Williams, N. et al, 2013; Starr, R. et al, 2003; Morgan, D. et al, 2014; Gittell, H. et al, 2006; Magis, K., 2010; Norris, F., H. et al, 2008.
2.	Human resources; Experience; Knowledge; Specialized knowledge; Skills (mobilization skills); Insightfulness; Innovations; Panoramic thinking; Competences.	Pakalnienė, R., 2015; Morgan, D. et al, 2014; Wheelen, T. L. et al, 2015; Norris, F. H. et al, 2003; Boschma, R. and Capone, G., 2014; Starr R. et al, 2003; L.G. and Deal, T.E., 2008.

No.	Social resilience factors	Author
3.	Leadership, management; Management means: administration; Management and accountability Ability to manage requirements, challenges and changes; Organizational leaders' role; Strategic management; Resource management; Negotiation skills; Seeking common welfare.	Morgan, D. et al, 2014; Norris, F. H. et al, 2008; Bristow, G. and Healey, A., 2013.
4.	Communicational factors; Collaboration development; Connections that create successful partnership organizational networks; Concentration; Partnership process, effectiveness; Variety of partners; Synergistic results; Community involvement; Unidirectional activity; Communication, agreements; Feedback interaction with other organizations; Hope, belief in success.	Simmie, J. and Martin, R., 2010; Munari, F. et al, 2012; Williams, N. et al, 2013; Pakalnienė, R., 2015; Morgan, D. et al, 2014; Chandra, A. et al, 2013; Williams, N. et al, 2013; Bolman, L.G. and Deal, T.E., 2008; Gittell, H. et al, 2006.
5.	Economic growth; Economic challenges; Economic justice; Finance management; Use of material and non-material resources; Technological challenges; Industry and technology.	Barca, F. et al, 2012; Morgan, D. et al, 2014; Van der Ploeg, J.D. et al, 2010; Oostindie, H. et al, 2010; Simmie, J. and Martin, R., 2010; Chandra, A., et al, 2013; Boschma, R. and Capone, G., 2014.
6.	Social and social resilience factors; Social conditions; Social justice; Social capital.	Barca, F. et al, 2012; Oostindie, H. et al, 2010; Simmie, J. and Martin, R., 2010; Chandra, A. et al, 2013.
7.	Legal environment; Laws regulating organizational activity; Legal base;	Chandra, A. et al, 2013; Barca, F. et al, 2012.
8.	Political factors; Political conditions.	Barca, F. et al, 2012; Simmie, J. and Martin, R., 2010.
9.	Environmental factors; Environmental protection challenges.	Oostindie, H. et al, 2010; Simmie, J. and Martin, R., 2010.

The distinguished organizational social resilience factors (Table 1) may be separated into bigger groups: structural-organizational; human resources; leadership; communication-collaboration; economic; social; legal; political and environmental factor groups (Fig. 1).



Source: prepared by the author

**Figure 1. Model for evaluating organizational social resilience factors**

A model for evaluating organizational social resilience factors was prepared (Fig. 1) which separates organizational social resilience factors into bigger factor groups. The factors in every group are important for strengthening social resilience in organizations operating in rural regions.

**Conclusions**

Through theoretical analysis, key factors for evaluating the social resilience of organizations operating in rural regions were identified. It was observed that separate factors, which scientific sources distinguish as having the strongest impact on strengthening organizational social resilience constitute nine groups of resilience factors. The most important of these are four groups which combine the most factors which were scientifically proven to be the best for evaluating social resilience in an organization. These groups were the following: structural-organizational; human resources; leadership and communication factor groups. The model for evaluating organizational social resilience factors reveals the key social resilience factors which enable organizations to overcome unfavourable events and help organizations to effectively function and seek for positive results in extreme situations.

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