

A DYNAMIC MODEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE THROUGH THE INTERACTION OF RESOURCES, CHALLENGES, AND EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING: BEYOND STATIC BALANCE

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Abstract: Contemporary organizations operate in an environment characterized by unprecedented volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. In this context, organizational resilience has become a strategic imperative rather than merely a competitive advantage. However, the current understanding of how organizations build and sustain their resilience remains fragmented, with theoretical approaches functioning within disciplinary silos and favoring reactive perspectives at the expense of proactive mechanisms. This article develops an integrative theoretical framework to explain how organizations construct sustainable resilience through the dynamic management of their resources and challenges, moderated by employee well-being. We synthesize four major research streams: paradox theory of dynamic equilibrium, conservation of resources theory, the job demands-resources model, and the organizational resilience literature. Based on this critical synthesis, we develop the (Resources-dynamic equilibrium-well-being-adaptation-resilience) Model, which conceptualizes resilience as an emergent property of a dynamic, multilevel process. Our main contribution is threefold. First, we conceptualize resilience not merely as a response to adversity but as the result of a continuous effort to maintain a dynamic balance between available organizational resources and encountered challenges. Second, we theorize the central moderating role of employee well-being in transforming this balance into effective resilience capabilities. Third, we explicate the temporal (gain and loss cycles, upward and downward spirals), cyclical, and multilevel (individual, group, organizational) mechanisms underpinning this complex process. We formulate six testable theoretical propositions that articulate the relationships among these key concepts. We conclude by discussing the profound implications of our model for advancing organizational theory and managerial practice, suggesting new avenues for future research and for designing more human-centered, adaptive, and sustainable organizations in an ever-changing world.

Keywords: Organizational resilience, dynamic equilibrium, employee well-being, conservation of resources theory, job demands-resources model, paradox theory, dynamic capabilities, multilevel processes.

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1. Introduction

The contemporary organizational environment is increasingly characterized by persistent and unpredictable turbulence. From global health crises to geopolitical reconfigurations, rapid technological disruptions, and pressing ecological imperatives, organizations face a continuous stream of challenges that threaten their stability, performance, and ultimately, their survival (Su & Junge, 2023; Joussem et al., 2025). This reality has propelled the notion of organizational resilience to the forefront of academic and managerial concerns. Resilience has transcended its status as an academic concept to become a strategic imperative, a *sine qua non* condition for organizational sustainability in what some researchers refer to as a low-certainty environment.

However, despite the growing attention given to this phenomenon, the understanding of how organizations develop and maintain this crucial capability remains fragmented and incomplete. The existing literature on organizational resilience predominantly focuses on organizations' reactive responses to well-defined external shocks and adversities, such as natural disasters, financial crises, or pandemics (Linnenluecke, 2017). This perspective, while useful for understanding post-crisis recovery mechanisms, tends to overlook the proactive capabilities and internal dynamics that enable some organizations not only to survive but to thrive under conditions of chronic uncertainty, that is, in the absence of identifiable discrete shocks.

A particularly notable blind spot in this literature concerns the integration of human factors and collective psychological processes into macro-organizational models of resilience. While employee well-being is increasingly recognized as a factor of organizational performance (Anand et al., 2024; Murphy, 2024), its precise role in the construction of systemic resilience remains largely under-theorized. Resilience models tend to prioritize structural variables (financial resources, organizational redundancy, diversification) to the detriment of human and psychological variables which, nevertheless, constitute the living substrate of any organizational capability.

This observation reveals a fundamental theoretical gap at the intersection of several research domains. On the one hand, macro-organizational theories, such as the dynamic equilibrium theory of paradoxes (Smith & Lewis, 2011; Weiser & Laamanen, 2022), offer powerful frameworks for understanding the management of tensions inherent in organizational life, but they lack specificity regarding the concrete resources and challenges that must be balanced. On the other hand, micro-organizational theories, such as the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018) and the job demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2023), provide detailed and empirically validated models on how individuals manage their psychological resources in the face of professional demands, but they struggle to explain how these individual processes aggregate and interact to shape capabilities at the organizational level as a whole. Consequently, no model coherently and integratively articulates the dynamic and multilevel interaction between the balance of organizational resources and challenges, collective employee well-being, and the emergence of organizational resilience as a systemic property.

To fill this theoretical and empirical gap, this article poses the following research question: *How does the dynamic balance between organizational resources and challenges, moderated by employee well-being, contribute to the construction of organizational resilience across multiple levels of analysis (individual, group, organizational) and over time?*

To answer this question, we develop a new conceptual framework, namely the RED-BAR Model (Resources-dynamic equilibrium-well-being-adaptation-resilience). This model proposes an innovative vision of resilience, not as a static state or a mere capacity to bounce back, but as an emergent property of a continuous, proactive, and deliberate process of managing the interface between available resources and encountered challenges. Our theoretical contribution is threefold and can be summarized as follows.

We conceptualize resilience as the result of a constant effort to maintain a dynamic equilibrium between available resources and encountered challenges, an equilibrium that is never definitively achieved but constantly sought and adjusted. Subsequently, we position employee well-being not as a mere pleasant consequence of good management or as one outcome variable among others, but as a central moderating mechanism, a true psychological catalyst that determines the effectiveness with which an organization can transform its structural resource-challenge balance into effective adaptive and resilient capabilities. Finally, we explicate the temporal (cycles of resource gain and loss, upward and downward spirals), cyclical (positive and negative feedback loops), and multilevel (bottom-up aggregation processes and top-down influence across individual, group, and organizational levels) mechanisms that govern this complex and dynamic process.

The article is structured as follows. We begin with a critical and synthetic review of the four theoretical pillars on which our integrative model rests: dynamic equilibrium and paradox theory, resource theories, the organizational resilience literature, and research on workplace well-being. This review does not merely summarize the contributions of each stream but identifies their respective limitations and opportunities for integration. Next, we present in detail our integrative model, the RED-BAR model, articulating its conceptual components, central mechanisms, and formulating a series of six testable theoretical propositions that structure the relationships among the key concepts. Finally, we discuss the profound implications of our model for advancing organizational theory and managerial practice, suggesting new avenues for future research and for designing more human, adaptive, and sustainable organizations in a world of perpetual transformation.

2. Theoretical foundations – A critical synthesis

2.1. The equilibrium perspective – From stability to paradoxical dynamics

To construct our integrative model, we rely on four theoretical pillars that we will examine critically and synthetically. Each of these research streams offers essential insights into organizational dynamics but also presents limitations that call for a new integrative synthesis. We successively analyze the equilibrium and paradox perspective, the resource perspective, the resilience perspective, as well as the role of well-being as the missing link between these approaches.

The notion of equilibrium has been fundamental in organizational theory since the seminal works of Barnard and Simon classical approaches, inspired by cybernetic systems and open systems theory, long promoted a homeostatic view of the organization, in which it seeks to maintain an internal state of stability in the face of external disturbances through regulatory mechanisms and negative feedback. Within this perspective, equilibrium is conceptualized as a static or quasi-static state, a desirable endpoint toward which the organization must strive. However, this view proves inadequate for the complexity and turbulence of contemporary environments, which require not a return to a prior state but continuous adaptation and transformation, even a capacity to anticipate and proactively shape the environment.

Paradox theory offers a more robust and realistic alternative by conceptualizing organizations as entities inherently traversed by persistent and contradictory tensions that cannot be definitively resolved (e.g., exploration vs. exploitation, control vs. autonomy, short-term profit vs. long-term investment, stability vs. change). Within this theoretical framework, sustainable performance does not arise from eliminating tensions or choosing one pole of the tension at the expense of the other, but from their active management and acceptance as an integral part of organizational reality. The dynamic equilibrium model of Smith and Lewis (2011) is central to this perspective. It proposes that the highest-performing organizations do not select one pole of the tension at the expense of the other selection strategy but engage in cyclical and iterative responses that allow them to navigate between extremes and benefit from the advantages of both poles integration strategy. This balancing process is described as managerial reflection

requiring proactive agency, constant vigilance, and the capacity to continuously adjust priorities to avoid excessive polarization and organizational deadlock.

More recently, Weiser and Laamanen (2022) have enriched and complicated this model by introducing the concept of dissipative equilibrium, drawing directly from the thermodynamics of open systems far from equilibrium. Ilya Prigogine, they argue that all organizational equilibrium is intrinsically temporary, precarious, and ephemeral. Unlike classical thermodynamic equilibrium, which is stable and permanent, dissipative equilibrium can only be maintained through a continuous flow of energy and resources from the environment. Applied to the organizational context, this means that maintaining the viability of the organization does not consist in achieving a stable equilibrium once and for all, but rather in continuously investing managerial and organizational energy to recognize emerging threats, detect weak signals of imbalance, and implement corrective actions that allow the system to be constantly rebalanced. This perspective emphasizes the fundamentally processual, dynamic, and energy-intensive nature of managing organizational paradoxes.

Thus, as a critical synthesis, it is assumed that the perspective of dynamic and paradoxical equilibrium provides a powerful conceptual engine for our model, shifting research attention from the pursuit of a static equilibrium to the ongoing process of balancing and rebalancing. It acknowledges that organizations exist in a state of permanent tension and that performance lies in managing this tension rather than resolving it. However, its main limitation is its high level of abstraction. It identifies the existence of paradoxical tensions but often remains vague and generic regarding the concrete and specific nature of the elements that must be balanced in particular organizational contexts. Our contribution consists in applying this powerful paradoxical lens to the fundamental and universal dialectic between the resources available to an organization and the challenges it faces, thereby offering a more tangible, operationalizable, and practical anchor for analyzing dynamic equilibrium in diverse organizational contexts.

2.2. The Resource perspective – From individuals to organizations

Resource management has been at the core of organizational survival and performance since the foundational work of the resource-based view school. Two major theories, operating primarily at the individual and job level, offer detailed and empirically validated psychological mechanisms to understand this resource management dynamic. Conservation of Resources theory, developed by Stevan Hobfoll (1989) and regularly updated (Hobfoll et al., 2018), postulates that individuals are fundamentally motivated to obtain, retain, protect, and cultivate what they value that is, their resources. These resources can be of various types: objects (e.g., housing), conditions (e.g., stable employment), personal characteristics (e.g., self-esteem, skills), or energies (e.g., time, money, knowledge).

Psychological stress arises not only from an actual loss of resources but also from the threat of loss or the lack of resource gain following a significant investment of effort or initial resources. COR theory is particularly powerful in explaining temporal dynamics through the concept of resource gain and loss spirals. The acquisition of resources tends to facilitate the acquisition of new ones, creating a virtuous upward spiral (resources beget resources), whereas resource loss increases vulnerability to further losses, creating a vicious downward spiral (loss begets loss). These spirals explain why the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, not only in economic terms but also in psychological and social resource terms.

The job demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017, 2023) proposes that any work environment can be parsimoniously characterized by two broad categories of factors: job demands and job resources. Job demands are not necessarily negative in themselves, but they become sources of strain and exhaustion when they require sustained physical, psychological, social, or organizational effort that is costly in terms of energy without adequate recovery opportunities. Job resources, on the other hand,

are functional for achieving work goals, reducing the psychological and physiological costs of demands, and stimulating personal growth and professional development. The JD-R model postulates two main and relatively independent processes: a health and motivational process, where resources lead to work engagement, performance, and well-being, and a stress and exhaustion process, where excessive and chronic demands lead to burnout and health deterioration. The interaction between demands and resources is crucial: resources can notably buffer (moderate) the negative impact of demands on health and well-being, transforming potentially harmful demands into challenging and stimulating ones.

Thus, as a critical synthesis, it is assumed that COR and JD-R theories provide robust, detailed, and empirically validated psychological mechanisms to understand how the balance between resources and challenges (demands) affects well-being, motivation, and behavior at the individual level. Their main limitation, however, lies in their difficulty to scale up to explain collective and systemic organizational phenomena. They do not explicitly theorize how the aggregation of individual psychological states and local equilibria (at the job level) translates into a collective and systemic capacity such as organizational resilience. Moreover, they tend to conceptualize resources and demands as relatively stable characteristics of the work environment, neglecting their dynamic nature and evolution over time depending on the actions of the organization and its members. Our model aims to bridge this gap by explicitly linking the resource-challenge balance at the individual, group, and organizational levels, and by theorizing the upward aggregation and downward influence mechanisms that enable the emergence of resilience as a systemic property.

2.3. The Resilience perspective – From reaction to anticipation

Research on organizational resilience has experienced exponential growth over the past two decades, particularly following catastrophic events such as September 11, 2001, the 2008 financial crisis, and more recently the Covid19 pandemic. Resilience is broadly defined as an organization's capacity to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and adapt to disruptions, shocks, and changes in order to survive and thrive in a turbulent environment (Williams et al., 2017). A recent comprehensive systematic review by Su and Junge (2023), covering 127 publications between 1997 and 2022, highlights several emerging consensuses in this research field. Resilience is thus conceptualized not as a static state or fixed organizational trait, but as a dynamic process unfolding across multiple distinct temporal phases before, during, and after adversity, involving different capabilities at each phase. It is fundamentally a multilevel capacity, with antecedents and manifestations at the individual level (e.g., self-efficacy, optimism, coping skills), group level (e.g., team cohesion, transformational leadership, psychological safety), organizational level (e.g., financial resources, organizational slack, adaptive culture, redundancy), and inter-organizational network level (e.g., trust relationships with partners, supplier diversification). The nature of adversity (its novelty, severity, predictability) significantly influences the nature of the required resilient response and the relative effectiveness of different antecedents.

This literature has evolved from an initial and simplistic view of resilience as a mere capacity to bounce back (i.e., returning to the pre-disruption normal state) toward a more sophisticated and nuanced conception including adaptation (bouncing forward, i.e., changing to face the new reality and adjusting flexibly) and transformation (bouncing beyond, i.e., becoming fundamentally different and potentially better after the crisis by learning from the experience). Recent work on dynamic capabilities and resilience (Joussen et al., 2025; Tarigan et al., 2025) emphasizes the importance of specific organizational capabilities such as sensing, seizing opportunities, and transforming to enable organizations to navigate environments characterized by low degrees of certainty.

Thus, as a critical synthesis, while it is assumed that the current literature on resilience is rich, diverse, and rapidly expanding, it remains dominated by a fundamentally reactive and event-driven logic. The focus is primarily on the response to discrete and identifiable adverse events that have already occurred

(e.g., a natural disaster, a cyberattack, the bankruptcy of a key partner). The proactive and continuous mechanisms that enable an organization to build its resilience capacity in the absence of an immediate and identifiable crisis, that is, in the normal course of daily operations, are less well understood and theorized. Resilience is often treated as a dependent variable, an outcome to be explained by various antecedents, rather than as a dynamic capability that is constantly built, maintained, and strengthened through daily operations and ordinary organizational management. Our model proposes to view resilience as the product of a continuous and proactive process of balancing resources and challenges, thereby offering a complementary perspective that is more proactive, developmental, and anchored in the organizational quotidian.

2.4 The missing link – Well-being as a regulatory mechanism

Employee well-being, long considered a soft, secondary, or peripheral objective compared to the hard goals of performance and profitability, is increasingly recognized as a strategic factor in organizational performance. Recent reports from major consulting firms (Gallup, 2024) and academic studies (Anand et al., 2024; Murphy, 2024; Garcia, 2025) document the links between employee well-being and various indicators of organizational performance, such as productivity, innovation, talent retention, and customer satisfaction. Research generally distinguishes hedonic well-being the presence of positive affects and the absence of negative affects, pleasure, and satisfaction from eudaimonic well-being the sense of meaning, competence, autonomy, and personal fulfillment, flourishing, and actualization of one's potential.

In the theories we have previously examined, well-being primarily appears as a consequence, a dependent variable. In the JD-R model, it is the result of a favorable balance between resources and demands at work. In Conservation of Resources theory, it is the consequence of a positive balance of resource gains and losses. This conceptualization of well-being as a dependent variable is important and valid, but it is incomplete. However, an emerging perspective, notably stemming from positive psychology and the theory of positive emotions, suggests that well-being can also be a cause, an antecedent, and a resource in itself that influences organizational processes. Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build theory, for example, postulates that positive emotions a key component of hedonic well-being have the evolutionary function of broadening individuals' thought-action repertoires, making them more creative, more open to new experiences, and more capable of building enduring resources physical, intellectual, social, psychological. A state of well-being thus promotes not only psychological comfort but also cognitive and behavioral processes that are functional for adaptation and performance.

Thus, as a critical synthesis, we propose that the missing link in current models of organizational performance and resilience is the theorization of well-being not only as a passive and desirable outcome of favorable organizational conditions but as an active regulatory mechanism that dynamically influences the organization's capacity to function effectively. We argue that the level of collective well-being within an organization acts as a moderator, a true psychological and social catalyst that determines the effectiveness with which an organization can transform its structural balance of resources and challenges into effective adaptive and resilient capacities. A high level of well-being could amplify an organization's ability to mobilize its resources and face challenges constructively, whereas a low level of well-being could render it fragile and vulnerable, even in the presence of abundant structural resources. This fundamental proposition lies at the heart of our integrative RED-BAR model.

3. The Integrative model – An integrative conceptual framework

3.1 General presentation of the model

The critical synthesis of existing literatures reveals the imperative need for a conceptual framework that transcends disciplinary silos to offer a unified, coherent, and dynamic vision of organizational resilience. To address this theoretical and practical need, we introduce the RED-BAR Model. This model does not merely juxtapose or mechanically combine existing approaches; rather, it organically rearticulates them around a new conceptual driver: the proactive and continuous pursuit of a dynamic balance between organizational resources and encountered challenges, with employee well-being as the central regulatory and amplifying mechanism that transforms this structural balance into effective adaptive capacities.

The RED-BAR model conceptualizes organizational resilience not as a static attribute, a fixed organizational personality trait, or a simple capacity for punctual reaction, but as an emergent systemic property that is continuously constructed, maintained, reinforced, and sometimes eroded through a dynamic and multilevel process. This process relies on the complex and recursive interaction of five fundamental components: organizational resources (the stock of mobilizable capacities), organizational challenges (the demands and opportunities requiring resource mobilization), the pursuit of a dynamic Balance between these two poles, employee well-being as a moderator of the effectiveness of this balance, and the resulting Adaptation capacities (anticipation, absorption, adaptation, transformation), ultimately leading to organizational Resilience as a meta-capacity.

The overall architecture of our model positions the dynamic balance between resources and challenges as the core of the resilience-building process. This balance does not directly and mechanically influence resilience; rather, its effect is significantly moderated by the collective well-being of employees. It is this synergistic interaction between structural balance and psychological well-being that generates specific adaptive capacities (anticipation of disruptions, shock absorption, flexible adaptation, positive transformation) which, in turn, constitute and reinforce organizational resilience. The model also incorporates crucial feedback loops, illustrating how the outcomes of the process (e.g., successful transformation and organizational learning) enrich the organization's resource stock, thereby creating a virtuous spiral, and how the state of organizational resilience, in turn, influences employee well-being, generating either a virtuous or vicious cycle depending on the trajectory.

3.2 Components and conceptual definitions

To ensure conceptual clarity and theoretical rigor, we precisely define each component of the RED-BAR model based on relevant literatures.

- Organizational resources, we adopt a broad and multidimensional view of resources, inspired by the RBV and its extensions. Resources include not only tangible and easily quantifiable assets (financial capital, physical infrastructure, equipment, technologies) but also and above all intangible assets that often constitute the most sustainable sources of competitive advantage. These encompass human capital (skills, tacit and explicit knowledge, experience, creativity), social capital (internal and external trust networks, quality of interpersonal and inter-organizational relationships, coordination capacity), and organizational capital (corporate culture, organizational routines and processes, reputation, brand, intellectual property, learning capability). These resources represent the stock of capabilities that an organization can potentially mobilize to achieve its objectives and address challenges.
- Organizational challenges, contrary to a unidimensional and negative view that equates them solely with threats or sources of stress, we define challenges in a neutral and paradoxical manner as any internal or external demand, constraint, pressure, or opportunity that requires significant mobilization and consumption of resources to be effectively addressed. A challenge may take the

form of increased production requirements, intense competitive pressure, new restrictive regulations, an unexpected crisis, technological disruption, or an ambitious market opportunity to seize. The fundamentally paradoxical nature of challenges is central to our model: they are simultaneously a source of tension, stress, and resource consumption, and a potential catalyst for growth, learning, innovation, and the development of new capabilities. The issue is therefore not to eliminate challenges but to balance them with adequate resources.

- Dynamic resource-challenge balance is not a static state of mathematical equality or a fixed equilibrium point, but a continuous, deliberate, and proactive process of adjustment and rebalancing aimed at maintaining an optimal and dynamic ratio between available and mobilizable resources and encountered and anticipated challenges. This optimal balance is achieved when challenges are sufficiently stimulating, ambitious, and meaningful to avoid stagnation, complacency, and atrophy of organizational capabilities, while resources are sufficiently abundant, accessible, and mobilizable so that these challenges are perceived by organizational members as surmountable and manageable, thereby fostering proactive engagement, intrinsic motivation, and creativity rather than paralyzing anxiety, disengagement, or burnout. The objective is to operate within a zone of constructive tension or organizational proximal development zone, midway between complacency (excess resources relative to challenges, comfort zone) and anxiety or burnout (excess challenges relative to resources, danger zone).
- Employee well-being conceptualize it not as a purely individual psychological state but as a collective psychological state, an emergent property at the group and organizational levels, a shared psychosocial climate. It encompasses both the hedonic dimension (an organizational climate characterized by high positive affect, enthusiasm, satisfaction, and low negative affect, minimal anxiety or depression) and the eudaimonic dimension (a collectively shared sense of meaningful work, collective competence, autonomy, and realization of collective potential). Collective well-being is manifested through indicators such as psychological safety, interpersonal trust, affective commitment, and organizational vitality.
- Organizational resilience define it as a dynamic meta-capability, a second-order capability that integrates and orchestrates a portfolio of first-order adaptive capabilities. It is manifested by the organization's ability to anticipate potential disruptions, threats, and opportunities through strategic monitoring and sensitivity to weak signals; absorb initial shocks and disturbances while maintaining essential functions and viability through redundancy and flexibility mechanisms; adapt flexibly, rapidly, and creatively to new environmental conditions and demands; and proactively transform by learning from experience, developing new capabilities, and potentially emerging strengthened and improved from the ordeal. Resilience is therefore not a return to the status quo ante but a capacity for positive evolution.

3.3 The central process – The quest for dynamic balance

The core of our model rests on the fundamental idea that adaptive performance and resilience are not a linear and monotonic function of resources or challenges taken in isolation, but of their dynamic interaction and relative balance. Too few challenges relative to available resources leads to organizational inertia, complacency, bureaucratization, and progressive atrophy of adaptive capacities. Too many challenges relative to available resources leads to resource depletion, chronic stress, employee disengagement, and potentially organizational collapse. Optimal performance and resilience building lie within a zone of dynamic balance, a zone of constructive tension.

This idea, inspired by the famous Yerkes-Dodson law in psychology, which postulates an inverted U-shaped relationship between physiological arousal and cognitive performance, can be extended and applied at the organizational level. An organization endowed with immense resources but facing very

few significant challenges risks becoming complacent, bureaucratic, rigid, and incapable of adapting when the environment changes. Conversely, an organization confronted with overwhelming and multiple challenges without the necessary resources to address them inevitably heads towards chaos, disorganization, and potentially bankruptcy. Maximum adaptive performance and the building of resilience capacities are achieved when challenges are high, creating a salutary pressure for change, innovation, and learning, but employees and teams feel supported, equipped, and empowered by adequate resources to effectively meet these challenges. This leads us to our first theoretical proposition : **There is an inverted U-shaped relationship between the resource-to-challenge ratio and the organization's adaptive performance. Adaptive performance is maximal when organizational challenges are perceived as high, significant, and stimulating, yet simultaneously surmountable and manageable through adequate, accessible, and mobilizable resources.**

From this fundamental premise follows a major strategic implication for organizational management. The most effective strategy to build sustainable resilience is neither the maximal and indiscriminate accumulation of resources (which can create rigidity, high fixed costs, and inefficient allocation), nor the systematic and defensive avoidance of challenges (which leads to stagnation, obsolescence, and inability to adapt). The most resilient strategy consists in actively, intentionally, and sophisticatedly managing the dynamic interface between the two, deliberately seeking a state of constructive tension. This involves knowing how to mobilize and allocate resources flexibly and adaptively according to the challenges encountered, but also knowing how to select, calibrate, and sometimes create appropriate challenges to stimulate the organization, develop its capacities, and avoid complacency, without breaking or exhausting it. We therefore propose : **Organizations that develop organizational routines, managerial processes, and dynamic capabilities to actively manage the dynamic balance between resources and challenges (e.g., through adaptive strategic planning processes, flexible and responsive resource allocation, leadership that intentionally calibrates the level of challenge and support, and feedback and adjustment mechanisms) develop superior organizational resilience in the long term compared to those that focus unilaterally and statically on maximizing resources or minimizing challenges.**

It is the mastery of this complex interplay between support provision of resources and challenge exposure to stimulating challenges that constitutes the first fundamental pillar of building organizational resilience. However, this structural and objective balance alone is not sufficient. Its effectiveness and capacity to generate resilience crucially depend on how it is experienced, interpreted, and translated into actions by members of the organization, a psychological and social process in which collective well-being plays a decisive and amplifying role.

4. The moderating role of employee well-being

If the dynamic balance between resources and challenges constitutes the supporting framework and fundamental architecture of organizational resilience, employee well-being is its psychological and social mortar, the living environment in which this structural balance translates into effective adaptive actions and concrete resilience capacities. Our model posits that well-being is not a mere pleasant and desirable consequence of good management or a peripheral soft objective, but an active and indispensable ingredient, a central moderating mechanism that significantly amplifies the organization's capacity to capitalize on its resource-challenge balance to build authentic and sustainable resilience.

4.1 Well-being as an amplifier of the balance

An organization may, on paper and in its financial statements, present a perfect and optimal balance between its structural resources and the strategic challenges it faces. However, if the internal psychosocial climate is deleterious, toxic, or simply neutral, marked by interpersonal distrust, fear of

failure, cynicism, or lack of enthusiasm, the available resources will not be fully mobilized, exploited, and valued, and the challenges will be perceived and experienced as overwhelming threats, sources of insurmountable stress, rather than stimulating opportunities for growth and learning. Conversely, an organization endowed with a high level of collective well-being, characterized by trust, enthusiasm, shared meaning, and psychological safety, can achieve remarkable feats and demonstrate exceptional resilience even with more limited resources, as its members are more inclined to collaborate fluidly, innovate creatively, help each other spontaneously, and engage beyond the formal requirements of their roles.

Employee well-being positively moderates the relationship between the dynamic resource-challenge balance and organizational resilience. In other words, the positive effect of the balance on the development of resilience capacities (anticipation, absorption, adaptation, transformation) is significantly stronger, more pronounced, and more durable when the level of collective well-being within the organization is high, and significantly weaker, even null or negative, when well-being is low.

Well-being thus acts as a psychological and social lens through which the objective resource-challenge balance is subjectively interpreted, emotionally experienced, and behaviorally enacted. A high level of collective well-being creates a psychological context of safety, optimism, and collective efficacy that enables employees to perceive organizational resources as more accessible, abundant, and mobilizable, and challenges as more manageable, meaningful, and opportunity-bearing. It transforms an abstract structural balance into a concrete lived experience of empowerment, agency, and collective trust. This leads us to our central proposition, which articulates the crucial moderating role of well-being : **This proposition suggests that there is a synergistic interaction between structural balance and psychosocial well-being. Two organizations facing an objectively similar resource-challenge balance will develop very different levels of resilience depending on the well-being of their employees. The organization with a high level of well-being will more effectively convert this balance into organizational learning, flexible adaptation, and positive transformation, whereas the organization with a low level of well-being risks seeing this balance remain sterile, inoperative, or even deteriorate into a vicious spiral of mistrust, disengagement, and resource loss.**

4.2 Moderation mechanisms

Well-being is not an organizational luxury, a secondary objective, but a necessary, albeit insufficient, condition for an organization's resources and challenges to be alchemized into sustainable resilience. It is the psychological and social catalyst that transforms structural potential into effective capacity, and organizational structure into living, adaptive, and creative action. The moderating effect of well-being is neither magical nor mysterious ; it operates through concrete and identifiable psychological, affective, and behavioral mechanisms that can be analyzed and potentially measured. We identify three main pathways through which well-being amplifies the conversion of structural balance into effective organizational resilience.

- The cognitive pathway, well-being profoundly influences how employees process information, perceive their environment, and construct meaning. A climate of well-being fosters a more optimistic, constructive, and proactive appraisal of ambiguous or threatening situations. When faced with a new challenge or disruption, employees experiencing a high level of well-being are more likely to perceive and frame it as an opportunity for growth, a stimulating challenge, rather than as an existential threat. They also have a broader, more inclusive, and more creative perception of available resources, including non-obvious, latent, or unconventional resources (e.g., the possibility of seeking help from colleagues in other departments, experimenting with new approaches,

mobilizing external networks). This cognitive flexibility, this ability to reframe situations and perceive multiple possibilities, is essential for creative adaptation and organizational innovation.

- The affective pathway, this pathway is firmly grounded in Fredrickson's Broaden-and-Build theory (2001), one of the most influential theories in positive psychology. According to this theory, positive emotions, which are a central component of hedonic well-being, have an evolutionary and adaptive function of broadening individuals' thought-action repertoires. Unlike negative emotions, which tend to narrow attention and promote specific, rigid behavioral responses (flight, fight, freeze), positive emotions (joy, interest, pride, gratitude) broaden attention, foster divergent and creative thinking, and encourage the exploration of new possibilities. At the collective level, a positive affective climate encourages experimentation, psychological risk-taking, open communication, and spontaneous collaboration. These collective behaviors constitute the fertile ground for organizational learning, innovation, and transformation, which are key facets of resilience.
- The behavioral pathway, well-being is a powerful driver of proactive, discretionary, and extra-role behaviors, often described in the literature as organizational citizenship behaviors. Employees who feel well within their organization, who experience affective attachment and a sense of belonging, are more inclined to spontaneously help their colleagues, propose improvements and innovations, invest in solving collective problems beyond their formal job descriptions, and act as ambassadors and advocates for the organization. In situations of disruption, crisis, or major change, these discretionary and voluntary behaviors are invaluable. They constitute a form of latent resource or reserve capacity that cannot be decreed, commanded, or purchased, but that emerges spontaneously from a climate of well-being and trust. It is this voluntary and enthusiastic mobilization of energy, intelligence, and collective creativity that enables an organization to adapt flexibly, rapidly, and effectively, far beyond what its formal processes, hierarchical structures, and control systems would allow.

These three pathways are neither exclusive nor independent but mutually reinforce each other in a synergistic process. A state of well-being fosters more open and optimistic thoughts (cognitive), which generate positive emotions (affective), which in turn motivate more creative and prosocial actions (behavioral), producing positive outcomes that reinforce the collective sense of competence and positive emotions (feedback loop). It is this dynamic synergy that explains the power and importance of the moderating effect of well-being. We can therefore formulate the following proposition: **The moderating effect of well-being on the balance-resilience relationship is mediated by an increase in cognitive flexibility and positive reframing of challenges as opportunities, a broadening of thought-action repertoires through positive emotions and collective creativity, and an intensification of organizational citizenship behaviors and discretionary engagement.**

5. Temporal and multilevel dynamics

Organizational resilience is not a static characteristic acquired once and for all, like a diploma or a certificate. It is a dynamic capability that is progressively built, potentially eroded, and continuously reconstructed over time through the complex interaction of multiple organizational levels (individual, group, organizational) and temporal processes (cycles, spirals, feedback loops). The RED-BAR model accounts for this dynamic complexity by explicitly integrating temporal dynamics (gain and loss cycles, upward and downward spirals) and a rigorous multilevel perspective (bottom-up aggregation processes and top-down influence).

5.1 Resource cycles and spirals

Drawing directly from COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018) and its recent developments, our model postulates that the recursive interaction between the resource-challenge balance and well-being is not

linear and unidirectional but fundamentally cyclical and recursive, generating gain spirals (virtuous, upward) or loss spirals (vicious, downward) that reinforce themselves over time. These spirals explain why some organizations appear to become increasingly stronger, more resilient, and higher performing in the face of adversity and repeated challenges, while others enter a trajectory of accelerated decline, progressive weakening, and potentially collapse.

A virtuous gain spiral is initiated when an organization successfully maintains a dynamic balance between its resources and the challenges it faces. Meeting challenging and meaningful demands with adequate resources and appropriate support generates a collective sense of mastery, competence, and efficacy, which increases employee well-being. This enhanced well-being, as previously discussed, amplifies the cognitive, affective, and behavioral capacity to effectively mobilize available resources and approach future challenges in a constructive, proactive, and creative manner. Moreover, success in managing a challenge often creates new organizational resources (e.g., new knowledge and skills, improved and more efficient processes, strengthened trust and enhanced reputation, new networks and partnerships), which improves the organization's position for the next cycle and enables it to tackle even more ambitious challenges. This constitutes a self-sustaining positive reinforcement loop :

Balance – Increased well-being – Engagement and Creativity – Success in challenges – Creation of new resources – Enhanced capacity to maintain balance – Even higher well-being.

Conversely, a vicious loss spiral is triggered when a pronounced and sustained imbalance occurs, typically a chronic excess of challenges relative to available resources, or a qualitative mismatch between resources and challenges. This situation leads to the gradual depletion of resources, chronic stress, frustration, and a significant decline in individual and collective well-being. The decrease in well-being reduces employees' cognitive capacity (more rigid, less creative thinking), affective capacity (negative emotions that narrow attention), and behavioral capacity (disengagement, withdrawal, cynicism), making them less able to effectively utilize the remaining resources and more likely to perceive challenges as insurmountable and overwhelming threats. Repeated failure in the face of challenges can also result in a net and cumulative loss of resources (financial, reputational, human through turnover, social through the degradation of trust), further weakening the organization for the subsequent cycle. The negative reinforcing loop is initiated :

Imbalance – Decline in well-being – Disengagement and exhaustion – Failure in challenges – Loss of resources – Aggravated imbalance – Even lower well-being.

The distinctive contribution of our model is to link these resource spirals, traditionally studied at the individual level in psychological literature, to the trajectory of organizational resilience at the macro level. Organizational resilience is none other than the meta-organizational capacity to maintain, strengthen, and accelerate virtuous gain spirals while preventing, detecting early, and breaking vicious loss spirals before they become irreversible.

The recursive and dynamic interaction between the resource-challenge balance and employee well-being generates spirals of resource gain or loss which, over time and cumulatively, reinforce or erode organizational resilience. Resilience is therefore a function of the organization's capacity to proactively manage these temporal dynamics, to amplify positive spirals, and to interrupt negative spirals.

5.2 A multilevel process

Organizational resilience is a macroscopic and systemic property that emerges from the complex and dynamic interaction of processes occurring simultaneously at different organizational levels. The RED-

BAR model explicitly articulates these levels by showing how dynamic balance and well-being manifest, interact, and transform at each scale of analysis.

- Individual level, this is the fundamental and elementary level. Balance is experienced and perceived by each employee through the lens of the JD-R model: the subjective perceived balance between the demands of their position (workload, time pressure, complexity) and the resources they personally possess (skills, autonomy, social support from supervisors and colleagues, feedback). The management of personal resources (physical and psychological energy, skills, time, social relationships), as described by COR theory, is also crucial at this level. It is at this micro level that individual well-being is generated and experienced, forming the basic building block and substrate of collective well-being.
- Group level, within teams, departments, and organizational units, emergent and collective phenomena appear that cannot be reduced to the mere sum of individual states. The resource-challenge balance manifests through collective workload, team goals, and shared team resources (complementary skills, cohesion, coordination processes). Well-being aggregates and transforms into collective psychosocial climates, such as a climate of psychological safety (the shared belief that interpersonal risks can be taken without punishment), interpersonal trust, mutual support, or collective enthusiasm. These climates strongly influence the group's capacity to collaborate effectively, solve complex problems creatively, and collectively adapt to changes.
- Organizational level, at this macro level, the resource-challenge balance becomes a matter of overall strategy, capital allocation, and structural choices. Executive leadership decisions, human resource management policies (recruitment, training, compensation, development), organizational structure (centralized or decentralized, mechanistic or organic), and corporate culture (values, norms, symbols) shape the overall context in which strategic challenges are defined and resources allocated. Well-being manifests as an aspect of the overall organizational culture, an organizational well-being climate that transcends individual teams.

The RED-BAR model posits that these levels are not isolated or independent but interconnected and interdependent through bidirectional upward and downward influence mechanisms. For example, organizational human resource management policies organizational level, downward influence the availability of resources at the team level, which affects the balance perceived by individuals. Conversely, the aggregation of individual well-being or ill-being individual level, upward can influence the group climate and, ultimately, if the phenomenon is sufficiently widespread, force changes in organizational strategy or leadership. True and sustainable resilience is achieved when these levels are aligned, coherent, and mutually reinforcing in a multilevel synergy.

Organizational resilience is the product of a coherent alignment and synergy of resource-challenge balancing processes across the individual, group, and organizational levels. The moderating effects of well-being propagate and transform through these levels via upward influence mechanisms (e.g., the emergence of psychosocial climates through the aggregation of individual states) and downward mechanisms (e.g., the influence of leadership, culture, and organizational policies on individual perceptions and states).

Understanding resilience as a fundamentally temporal, dynamic, and multilevel phenomenon has profound implications for research and practice. This means that an intervention aimed at strengthening organizational resilience cannot be limited to targeting a single level of analysis in isolation. An organizational-level well-being policy (e.g., a wellness program) will be ineffective and cosmetic if frontline managers create a constant and chronic imbalance between demands and resources within their teams. Conversely, highly engaged, cohesive, and high-performing teams may eventually burn out and disintegrate if the organization's overall strategy structurally imposes challenges that exceed their

resources or if the organizational culture does not value well-being. Resilience is a complex, systemic, and multilevel dance, and the RED-BAR model provides the conceptual choreography to understand, analyze, and potentially orchestrate it.

6. Discussion

6.1 Theoretical implications

By proposing the RED-BAR model, we sought to build an ambitious theoretical bridge between conceptual islands that have hitherto been largely disconnected and operating within disciplinary silos. In doing so, our integrative conceptual framework offers new theoretical perspectives and raises important and stimulating implications for future academic research and contemporary managerial practice. In this section, we discuss the major theoretical contributions of our model, its concrete and actionable managerial implications, and the inherent limitations that pave the way for future empirical and conceptual investigations. Our model contributes to the organizational literature in several fundamental and distinctive ways.

It achieves an unprecedented and ambitious theoretical integration. By organically and coherently linking dynamic equilibrium and paradox theory, conservation of resources theory (COR), the job demands-resources model (JD-R), and the organizational resilience literature, the RED-BAR model provides a common language, a parsimonious framework, and a unified conceptual architecture to analyze complex organizational phenomena that were previously fragmented. It extends dynamic equilibrium theory by specifying the concrete nature of the tensions to be managed (resources versus challenges) and grounding it in identifiable psychological and social processes. It enriches COR and JD-R theories by projecting them to the organizational level and embedding them within a temporal dynamic of collective capability building. Above all, it offers the organizational resilience literature a proactive, endogenous, and continuous mechanism for resilience development, thereby complementing the reactive and event-driven mechanisms (responses to exogenous shocks) that still largely dominate this literature.

Our model proposes a substantial conceptual redefinition of resilience and well-being. Resilience is no longer conceptualized merely as a capacity to bounce back or recover after a shock but as a proactive dynamic meta-capability, the result of a continuous and deliberate process of balancing resources and challenges. More radically still, employee well-being is theoretically repositioned. It is no longer a simple outcome variable, a passive indicator of organizational health, or a peripheral soft objective, but a central strategic regulatory mechanism, an essential production factor, and an active moderator that determines how effectively the organization transforms its structural potential into adaptive performance and effective resilience. This invites researchers to study well-being not only as a dependent variable but also, and above all, as a moderating and mediating variable in models of organizational performance, change, and resilience.

By rigorously applying a paradoxical perspective to the relationship between resources and challenges, our model calls for a more nuanced, dialectical, and sophisticated view of organizational stressors and demands. Challenges are not intrinsically and uniformly harmful; they are a necessary and potentially beneficial source of stimulation, learning, skill development, and organizational growth. The strategic question is not to systematically eliminate or minimize challenges but to dynamically balance them with adequate resources and calibrate them to maximize their developmental potential while minimizing their destructive potential. This opens a promising research avenue on the optimal management of challenges and on how organizations can cultivate a culture of constructive challenge that stimulates without exhausting.

6.2 Practical and managerial implications

The RED-BAR model is not merely an abstract theoretical exercise; it offers a powerful new interpretative framework and concrete guidelines for leaders, managers, and HR practitioners seeking to build more robust, adaptive, and humane organizations in a turbulent world. The most direct and radical implication is the necessity to adopt a paradoxical and ambidextrous leadership. Leaders who are effective in building resilience must be capable of simultaneously and balancedly managing two seemingly contradictory imperatives: they must know how to both provide unconditional support, abundant resources, and an environment of psychological safety (care, compassion, support), and at the same time set ambitious goals, high standards, and challenging demands that push the organization beyond its comfort zone (challenge, rigor, stimulation). Focusing exclusively on one of these poles to the detriment of the other is suboptimal and potentially dangerous. An excess of support without challenge leads to complacency and stagnation. An excess of challenge without support leads to exhaustion and collapse. The leader's role becomes that of a dynamic balance manager, who constantly and sensitively adjusts the level of pressure and support according to the context, the state of their teams, and well-being signals.

A second major and practical implication is that employee well-being becomes a strategic leading indicator of organizational resilience and future performance. Rather than relying solely on retrospective and lagging financial indicators (which measure the past), organizations should implement sophisticated systems for measuring collective well-being in real time or near real time pulse surveys, HR analytics. A significant and sustained decline in well-being is not merely an HR issue to be addressed in isolation; it is a major strategic alarm signal indicating a potentially dangerous imbalance between resources and challenges, and thus an erosion of the organization's future resilience capacity. Proactive monitoring of well-being becomes a strategic management and prevention tool, on par with the monitoring of financial indicators.

Our model advocates for the holistic design of resilience-generating organizations, that is, organizations that structurally promote resilience through their very design. This does not involve launching isolated, cosmetic, or operationally disconnected well-being programs, but rather rethinking the organization's fundamental systems through the lens of dynamic balance and well-being. This concerns the design of workstations (application of the JD-R model to balance demands and resources), skills development and talent management policies (proactive human resource management), strategic planning (deliberate management of challenges and their calibration), and managerial culture (promotion of paradoxical leadership, psychological safety, and recognition). The objective is to create an organizational system where balance and well-being are not externally imposed goals, but natural emergent properties of the organization's normal functioning.

6.3 Limitations and future research directions

Like any theoretical model, the RED-BAR model presents inherent limitations that serve as stimulating invitations for future research. The first concerns the operationalization and measurement of key concepts. How can such a complex and multidimensional concept as the dynamic resources-challenges balance be measured reliably, validly, and practically at the organizational level? How can an optimal balance be empirically distinguished from an imbalance? How can collective well-being be measured beyond the simple aggregation of individual scores? The development of innovative measurement scales, mixed evaluation methodologies (quantitative and qualitative), and organizational metrics (e.g., through analysis of internal HR data, regular pulse surveys, social network analyses) is a crucial and necessary first step to empirically test our model.

The second priority research avenue is empirical and longitudinal. Our model, by virtue of its fundamentally dynamic, temporal, and processual nature, calls for ambitious longitudinal studies. Tracking organizations over several years, or even decades, while measuring the evolution of their resource-challenge balance, employee well-being, and performance in the face of various disruptions would allow for rigorous testing of the propositions concerning gain and loss spirals and temporal mechanisms. In-depth comparative qualitative case studies would also be valuable for understanding the fine qualitative mechanisms of balancing in different organizational and sectoral contexts.

The issue of contextualization and contingency is essential for refining and nuancing our model. Is the optimal ratio between resources and challenges universal and invariant, or does it vary according to contextual factors? It is likely to vary depending on the industry sector (a stable and mature sector versus a hyper-competitive and rapidly disruptive sector), national culture (individualistic versus collectivist cultures, cultures with high versus low power distance), the developmental stage of the organization (startup versus mature organization), or the nature of the challenges encountered (predictable versus unpredictable challenges, technical versus adaptive challenges). Future research should systematically explore these contingency factors to refine the applicability and generalization of the RED-BAR model.

7. Conclusion

In a world defined by chronic uncertainty, increasing complexity, and persistent turbulence, the quest for organizational resilience has become central and unavoidable. This article has sought to move beyond the fragmented, reactive, and one-dimensional approaches that still dominate this rapidly expanding field of research. By proposing the RED-BAR model, we have advanced an integrative and innovative theoretical framework that places the dynamic balance between resources and challenges, moderated by employee well-being, at the heart of building sustainable and proactive resilience.

Our fundamental contribution is to rearticulate organizational performance around a new systemic and humanistic logic. Resilience and well-being are neither contradictory objectives to be arbitrated in a zero-sum game, nor parallel and independent goals to be pursued separately. They are deeply interdependent, interconnected, and synergistic, constitutive elements of the same dynamic system. Well-being is not a hedonistic end in itself or an organizational luxury, but the psychological and social engine that enables the organization to effectively face challenges, mobilize its resources, and adapt creatively. Managing challenges is not an inevitable and uniform source of stress and destruction, but a necessary condition for learning, innovation, and organizational growth, provided it is supported by adequate resources and a climate of well-being.

Ultimately, the RED-BAR model is a call for a more holistic, more human, and more sustainable vision of the organization. It suggests that building organizations capable of thriving over time does not rely on the relentless and myopic pursuit of short-term financial performance, but rather on the patient and deliberate cultivation of a dynamic balance where performance and well-being mutually reinforce each other in a virtuous spiral. Perhaps this is where the true recipe for organizational resilience lies: in the ability to orchestrate a complex symphony where challenges stimulate without exhausting, resources support without fostering complacency, and well-being sets the rhythm and vital energy.

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