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Research Article

Improving Organizational Resilience in Businesses: A Qualitative Study on the Effect of COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

Due to the long-term threat that it poses, COVID-19 has become an important problem for businesses, and therefore, for national economies. Obviously, organizations that have survived this process will be able to continue with more stability and will gain significant gains in terms of organizational resilience. The aim of this study is to investigate the strategies of businesses to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 period and the subsequent recovery process from the perspective of human resources, leaders, and corporate structure. From this point of view, this study was carried out with a case study, which is one of the qualitative research designs. During the data collection process of the study, interviews were conducted with fifteen senior managers of businesses operating in various sectors, selected by the purposive sampling technique. The data obtained from the in-depth and semi-structured interviews were subjected to thematic analysis in a case study design. The findings, which are divided under the three main headings of human resources, leadership, and organization/system, point to the following results: In terms of human resources: experience, generating ideas, psychological resilience, and commitment to the organization and its culture; in terms of leadership: valuing the employees, analytical thinking, foresight, quick decision making and prudence; and in terms of organization/system: positive financial situation, quick response to the market, the effectiveness of alternative solutions, effective use of digital infrastructure and online commerce, as well as effective communication/cooperation, contribute effectively to organizational resilience.

Keywords: Organizational resilience, COVID-19, Organizational Management, Crisis Management, Organizational strategy

1. Introductıon

Karl E. Weick, in his book "Managing the Unexpected" with K. M. Sutcliffe, states that "Un-expected events often control our resilience." (Bryce et al., 2020; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2013). Orga-nizations increasingly feel the need to be prepared in the face of all these unexpected situations, since technological developments and the diversification of the demands, as well as the needs of the people in the constantly transforming world, cause the business world to be more complex (McMunus et al., 2007; Patriarca et al., 2018). Naturally, as a result, protecting ourselves and our institutions against the risks associated with modern technologies has emerged as an important social concern in the industrialized world (Wildavsky, 1991).

Since COVID-19 has become a long-standing threat to human life, it has also become a major issue for businesses, and therefore, national economies. More than a year after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared an international public health emergency on January 30, 2020, it is still clearly evident that the epidemic has not yet been brought under control. The COVID-19 pandemic still continues to spread due to the virus mutating almost all over the world and due to the vaccination process still being in its initial stage (Nicola et al., 2020). According to IMF (2021) data, it is estimated that there will be an economic contraction of 3.5% (4.9% in developed econ-omies, and 2.4% in developing economies) in 2020 all over the world. It has been observed that especially the food-beverage, tourism, airline, sports, and entertainment companies have been hit hard, and many companies that could not continue their activities due to the pandemic have closed.

An important area of experience for businesses - on the condition of surviving - is the crisis. The gains obtained during the crisis periods can become important company strategies for the post-crisis period (Çengel et al., 2020). On the other hand, it is clear that the COVID-19 outbreak has given researchers the opportunity to explore how this crisis, which has different aspects, has been managed over time. Again, crisis periods bring differences in the way businesses conduct their work, and furthermore, transformations and innovations can be achieved. Therefore, it can be said that crisis periods offer opportunities for many companies to increase their resilience (Cheema-Fox et al., 2021). For example, digitalization was used as an important instrument in the face of the restrictions and lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic period, and it was ob-served that during the digital transformation process of the world, medium and long-term plans were changed to the short term; while the digital infrastructures were strengthened by making them suitable for remote/home working. In fact, Microsoft Corp. CEO Satya Nadella stated that the progress which was predicted to take two years, actually took only two months with digitali-zation (Microsoft, 2020).

With the COVID-19 pandemic threatening human life, it has become a major issue for busi-nesses and therefore the economies of countries. It would not be wrong to say that businesses have not seen such different and volatile economic conditions before. While this situation has caused many businesses to stop their activities, some of them have become more fragile, though it has also turned into an opportunity for businesses operating in some business sectors. In this context, most businesses have focused on coping with the crisis and adapting to the new and riskier envi-ronment that has been emerging. In this process, organizations sense and respond to external threats (Bryce et al., 2020; Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007). At this point, the concept of resilience, which is adapted to the field of organizational science from other disciplines, gains importance. Especially the business world, which is accustomed to unexpected situations caused by an eco-nomic recession, may be faced with relatively rare and unexpected situations such as natural di-

sasters, epidemics, and terrorist attacks from time to time. With the COVID-19 global pandemic that started at the beginning of 2020, the ability to take precautions against unexpected events and to continue activities in the face of what happened has gained much more importance. The concept of organizational resilience, which can be considered from the perspective of a systems approach, is based on the idea that the organization is a structure that should be handled not only within itself but also with its environment, within the framework of the holistic view of the systems approach, and explains the preparation, response, and quick return to unexpected situations that may come from the internal and external environment (Koçel, 2011).

The pandemic process has led to the questioning of the effectiveness of many business models. Hence, methods that work as well as those that are unhelpful, have been clearly differentiated from each other, and companies of almost all sizes and sectors are looking for methods that will allow them to do their jobs better and more efficiently. They encounter an "agile approach" in their quest to adapt to change and take firmer steps during uncertainty. For example, we are in a period where there is talk of returning from the "just-in-time" concept, which is indispensable for some businesses in the context of supply chain management due to the pandemic, to the "just-in-case" concept (HBR Turkey & ACM, 2020). We saw the first examples of this after the fire disasters in 1997 and the earthquake disasters in 2011, when Toyota adopted just-in-time systems to allow for at least one month's production of special components for products, in order to build flexibility (Li, 2020). This and many other actions have created the situation of reviewing various understandings and practices in businesses. At this point, it is an important research topic to understand what kind of actions businesses take in this period and what they do to increase their resistance in the face of turbulent conditions in the markets.

In this article, first of all, the general framework of the concept of organizational resilience will be presented. A resilient organization absorbs shocks and prevents emerging problems before they truly turn into crises (Boin & van Eeten, 2013). From this point of view, the COVID-19 period provides a suitable laboratory environment for researchers for a study focused on determining resilience strategies. The fact that there are only a few studies in the literature examining resistant organizations during the pandemic periods as well as the desire to contribute to the literature with good research has been our source of motivation. The subject of this study is based on the dimensions obtained from the literature and some strategies, methods and practices used by some organizations that achieved success in the COVID-19 period.

2. Theoretical Background

Identifying what is known, what is unclear, and even what is not known about the subject covered in the research can provide a working perspective (Berg & Lune, 2019). In qualitative research, it is important to conduct a literature review before the code, sub-theme, and theme determination process in terms of structuring the research correctly is commenced. Consequently, a conceptual framework has been drawn up for the concept of organizational resilience.

2.1. Organizational Resilience

Internal and external environmental conditions create different threats to business organizations in various forms while increasingly challenging them. Natural disasters, infectious diseases, terrorist attacks, recessions, equipment failure, and human errors are some examples that help us understand how many different events can undermine an organization's success and security. In recent years, it has been seen that businesses are increasingly trying to increase their ability to

respond to these crises (Annarelli & Nonino, 2016; Belkıs, 2016; Burnard et al., 2018; Stephenson et al., 2010). Along with instruments such as crisis management and risk management, the concept of organizational resilience has also been the subject of academic studies, and they have become concepts that the business world has pondered over. While crisis management focuses more on what to do after a crisis occurs, risk management is a risk-oriented concept that focuses on minimizing risks. The concept of organizational resilience, on the other hand, requires a more holistic view that includes both.

Before moving on to the concept of organizational resilience, if we define the concept of "resilience"; The concept expresses being able to come out of difficulties stronger, with self-efficacy and renewal (Bryce et al., 2020; Somers, 2009; Yılmaz Börekçi & Gerçek, 2018). The concept of resilience is a concept that has found its place in psychology, metallurgy, engineering, ecology, and many other fields since the first quarter of the 20th century. It is seen that the concept has been included in the literature of organizational science since the beginning of the 80s, together with the ones obtained from condition dependency approaches and resource dependence approaches (Mallak, 1998; Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007). First, Meyer (1982) examined how hospitals responded to an unexpected doctor's strike and clearly introduced the concept into organizational science literature, using the term resilience to mean an organization's resilience in the process of responding to shock and restoring order (Denyer, 2017). In his study, Meyer referred to James Thompson's studies in terms of the effects of environmental elements on the organizational structure and to the resource dependency approach of Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald R. Salancik, which was evaluated within the framework of adaptation approaches.

In the following years, the use of the concept of organizational resilience mostly focused on determining the causes of large-scale accidents and disasters of the time and similar issues. In this period, scientists who contributed to the literature especially emphasized operational safety and reliability, and focused on the characteristics of reliable organizations in times of crisis and complexity (Smart & Vertinsky, 1984; Vertinsky & Vertinsky, 1990). In the 90s, Karl E. Weick contributed to the relevant literature, especially with his examination of the Mann Gulch Forest fire event and the surviving firefighter's decision-making skills in the moment of panic. Thus, in his study, results were obtained on the ability to make improvised decisions in extraordinary situations and with the appropriate organizational structure (Linnenluecke, 2017; Weick, 1993). Again, the studies conducted within the scope of High-Reliability Organizations, in which Roberts (1989) contributed to the literature on aviation, nuclear power plants, and energy and gas distribution enterprises, are among the studies that have contributed to the formation of organizational resilience literature.

Thus, the concept of organizational resilience was used to explain the organization's capacity to respond and recover quickly against unexpected environmental turbulences and events such as economic crises, epidemics, and disasters (Denyer, 2017). Especially after September 11, 2001, it is seen that the relevant literature has developed and the focus on the subject has shifted to researching effective response mechanisms and coping with external threats and great conditions of uncertainty. Why can some organizations operate more comfortably in turbulent environments than others? (Andersson et al., 2019; Horne III, 1997; Rehak, 2020; Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007). Therefore, issues such as employee strengths, adaptable business models, and building resilience through better supply chain design have come to the fore. In some studies, there are also opinions that the concept of organizational resilience is based on Holling's (Holling, 1973) work in the field of ecology. Holling defined the resilience of an ecosystem as the measure of its ability to absorb

change and still exist. After this study, it is stated that Meyer and Weick put forward the view that the concept can be adapted for organizations and brought it to the organizational literature (Annarelli & Nonino, 2016). It can be said that the use of the term "resilient organizations" by Deevy (Jaquess, 1996) and the concept of organizational resilience by Horne III (Horne III, 1997) are among the first uses in the literature. In subsequent years, it is seen that Mallak (1998) contributed to the conceptualization of the expression of organizational resilience.

Gerçek and Börekçi (2019) stated that the concept of resilience in the organizational context refers to the ability of an organization to heal, adapt, and transform. It can be said that the development of this ability depends on many factors. Lengnick-Hall and Beck (2005) revealed that this ability has cognitive, behavioral, and contextual aspects. In some studies, it is seen that organizational resilience emphasizes predictive and intuitive dimensions (Rehak, 2020; Somers, 2009). Organizational resilience literature has generally dealt with the establishment of a structure for awareness of sensitive issues, organizational awareness, and accuracy in improvised decisions. Especially, the studies put forward by Weick can be considered as the basis of the concept (Weick, 1993; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2013). In this context, the concept does not represent a program or a short-term practice, but an understanding of the way it handles the subject and events.

3. Problem

"How has the situation of organizational resilience elements, which are underlined in applied studies especially after previous crisis situations in the literature, been shaped in the COVID-19 process?" The question constitutes our source of motivation for this research, the point we are very curious about, and therefore the main problem of the study. The sub-problems related to this are below;

I. According to the participants' views, which characteristics of human resources contributed to organizational resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic?

II. According to the participants' views, what characteristics of managers/leaders are needed to ensure organizational resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic?

III. What are the organizational resilience themes that stand out during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the participants' views?

We aimed to discuss the findings obtained in the study in the context of the sub-problems mentioned above. Care has been taken to present the findings in order of sub-research questions without adding comments. Furthermore, any differences in the results with the existing literature have been given in the discussion and conclusion sections.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Type, Design, and Model

It is possible to talk about many research designs in the qualitative research method. One of the qualitative research designs from the available options, i.e., case study, embedded theory, phenomenology, self-study, action research, and ethnography, has been selected, according to the research question(s) that we asked and the result that we wanted to reach in the study.

This study was conducted using the case study method, which is one of the qualitative research designs. The case study is an empirical research strategy that examines a current phenomenon in its real-life context and it is used especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the content are not clear. The case study to be examined can be a city, institution, situation, accident, or even an experience that can be investigated with a case study method. In this

context, the case study can be named as a natural occurrence that can be defined in a certain framework (Akturan ve Baş, 2013).
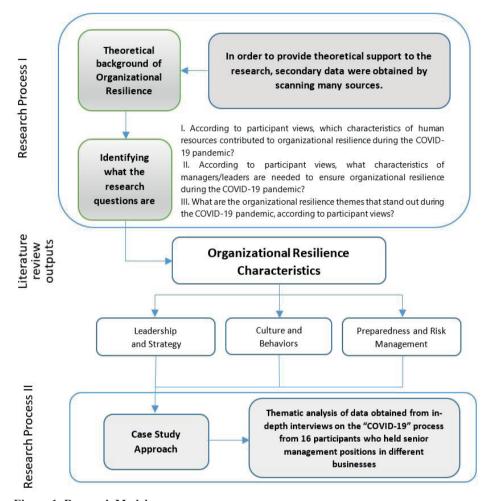

Figure 1: Research Model

Our research is based on the analysis of the organizational resilience concept of businesses under the influence of the COVID-19 outbreak. From this point of view, it is important to reveal the actual "situation" for businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic period.

4.2. Participants

The scope of the study consists of businesses that experienced a shock during the COVID-19 process and successfully continued their activities by fighting this situation. These enterprises have been selected based on the statements of the managers, by looking at the data in their finan-

cial statements and whether they have experienced a loss in the employed workforce in the last year. Intentional (judicial) sampling was preferred as the sampling method. Intentional sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which elements that can best provide the necessary information are selected for sampling (Patton, 1990). Fifteen managers working in these organizations, whose data were found to be positive, were included in the study. Four managers, who were interviewed beforehand, were excluded from the study since the companies they worked for did not fall within the scope of the study. Adhering to the principle of maximum diversity, executives from many different sectors were interviewed.

4.3. Validity and Reliability

In qualitative studies, validity can be considered as internal and external validity, and reliability as internal and external reliability (Eroğlu & Bektaş, 2016). Perhaps the most well-known and applied approach in increasing the internal validity of a study is triangulation (i.e., multiple methods). Triangulation is the use of more than one method - as much as possible - to investigate, define, and explain the problem in the clearest and most detailed way, and subsequently, the data collected by different methods is compared with each other (Yıldırım, 1999). There are four types of triangulation techniques. These are (Başkale, 2016); the researcher, data source, method, and theory triangulation. In this study, researcher triangulation was utilized with the participation of more than one researcher in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data, and data-based triangulation was included by interviewing different participants in the same sector. Consistency was tried to be ensured in the analysis process in terms of the perspectives and thoughts of the participants. Furthermore, internal validity was tried to be ensured by making direct quotations in the research. On the other hand, it is an important issue in terms of reliability whether the data in the transcripts obtained from the interviews in qualitative research are the opinions and thoughts of the participant. In this sense, the transcripts of the interview were sent to the participants via e-mail and the participant confirmed it. The data collection tool and process for external validity were explained, and the role of the researcher in the data analysis process was described. Again, information such as the selection of the sampling type, including the validity and reliability criteria, and the explanation of the reason for the selection of the selected research method were presented in the study to ensure external validity.

In order to ensure internal reliability, the interviews were video-recorded, and data loss was prevented. Afterwards, the transcriptions of the data, which were also emphasized by Creswell (2016), were checked by comparing them with the records available (Belkıs, 2016). Besides that, the findings were presented as they were, without including the researcher's comments. The data presented in the findings on external reliability were discussed in the same order, and the researchers agreed on the consistency of the results and findings sections. In general, consistency between the data was observed and theoretical support was received at all stages of the research process.

4.4. Data Collection Tool and Data Analysis

A data collection guide consisting of three parts was created for this research. In the first part, it was aimed to obtain information about the business, the sector, and the country in which it operates (2 questions). The second part focused on the information about the managers participating in the research (2 questions). In the third and last part, it was aimed to obtain opinions on the relationship between the COVID-19 epidemic and organizational resilience (10 questions). A data

collection guide was prepared with 14 questions. The questions were prepared based on the special situations experienced during the COVID-19 period and organizational resilience literature and include the question to assess whether the participant has different views and thoughts. The questions in the data collection guide were checked by two researchers who are experts in their respective areas, in terms of compliance with the literature. An in-depth interview technique was used to collect data. The interviews took place between December 2020 and April 2021. The average interview time was 40 minutes and lasted close to 11 hours in total.

Thematic analysis is a must-know analysis method for researchers using the qualitative method, as it provides essential skills that will be useful for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis. As a matter of fact, "thematization of meanings", which is an important stage for qualitative studies, is defined as one of the few general skills required by qualitative analysts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In a sense, thematic analysis can be thought of as content analysis without quantitative expressions. It is the preferred type of analysis because its results are understandable by the reader, it is a quick method, it draws unpredictable results, and it offers the opportunity to describe and summarize the subject effectively. In this context, "thematic analysis" was used in the analysis of the data obtained.

In this study, a inductive coding strategy (from specific to general) was chosen with the concepts extracted from the data. In other words, codes were produced from the data obtained from the interviews, and the coding was carried out with the ready-made codes taken from the literature. In this context, we can say that this study contains inductive elements. For the analysis of the data, the recorded interviews were deciphered, and their transcripts (170 pages) were transferred to the ATLAS.ti software. Subsequently, coding and controls were carried out within the software. The data were arranged in accordance with the thematic analysis, so that they could be accurately conveyed to the reader in a way that does not include the comments of the researcher in the findings section.

4.5. Findings

The findings of organizational resilience in the COVID-19 process have been given according to the research questions. Table 1 contains summary information about the participants and their businesses who agreed to participate in our study.

Table 1: Participants' Profile

No	Position	Country	Sector	Worked Firm Size	Experience
K.1	CEO	Turkiye	Biomedical Equipment	Middle	>30 years
K.2	CEO	Turkiye	Pharmaceutical	Middle	>15 years
K.3	CEO	Turkiye	Furniture Manufacturing	Middle	>10 years
K.4	Chief of R&D	Turkiye	Railways Manufacturing	Giant	>15 years
K.5	Chief of E-Commerce	Turkiye	Textile	Big	>5 years
K.6	CEO	Turkiye	Food	Big	>20 years
K.7	Purchasing Manager	Germany	Manufacturing	Middle	>25 years
K.8	CEO	U. K.	Manufacturing	Small	>10 years
K.9	Manager	Turkiye	Food	Small	>10 years
K.10	CEO	Turkiye	Financial Reporting	Small	>10 years
K.11	Director of Supply Chain	Turkiye	Furniture Manufacturing	Giant	>15 years
K.12	Purchasing Manager	Turkiye	Energy	Giant	>10 years
K.13	Entrepreneur	Turkiye	Software	Start-Up	>2 years
K.14	CEO Consultant	Turkiye	Manufacturing	Giant	>15 years
K.15	Entrepreneur	Turkiye	E-Commerce	Start-Up	>3 years

Adhering to the principle of maximum diversity, the participants were selected from the enterprises in the profit zone according to the latest balance sheet (based on the statements of the participants in the preliminary interviews). A business operating in England and Germany, outside of Turkey, was also included in the research.

4.5.1. Research Question I: What Type of Human Resources are Required for Resilient Organizations?

During the in-depth interviews held within the scope of the study, the participants talked about the behavior of human resources, their performance, their contribution to the business and their response to the COVID-19 outbreak, and much more. Some codes (in vivo) for the opinions expressed in this regard are given in Table 2 below.

As you can see in the chart, the employee who generates ideas and contributes to the company for which he or she works with his or her ideas in such a time has often been emphasized. In addition, the experience of human resources and the concern about losing trained human resources were prominent points in the data. A few quotes (in vivo) for experience and generating ideas in the interview data are given below. In addition, the experience of human resources and the concern about losing trained human resources were the prominent points in the data. A few quotes (in vivo) for experience and generating ideas in the interview data are given below.

> *"...Ideas came from the lower staff, we even evaluated some ideas, but there are risks in this business and we are an institution that doesn't like to take risks. Therefore, there were also ideas that we could not implement, but the willingness of our employees to contribute made us happy." [K-1]*
>
> *"...The biggest problem during the crisis is to manage uncertainty, so we are a team with experience in how to manage uncertainty." [K-3]*
>
> *"...Due to the interruption of training and the prohibition of wedding ceremonies, our sales in some items decreased, so we could not increase the number of employees. In this process, the issue we focused more on was not to lose our experienced employees (masters)." [K-9]*
>
> *"...We realized that we needed to diversify our customer portfolio. Therefore, we hired three highly experienced employees, one of whom is the product group sales director, to the marketing department." [K-8]*
>
> *"...The experience and opinions of our employees are valuable to us not only in this process, but at all times. We are a company that manufactures complex machines. If there is a suggestion about the size of a screw, for example, from our human resources working on the assembly line, we immediately evaluate it and make the necessary changes if appropriate." [K-7]*

Table 2: Selected Codes Regarding Human Resources

Selected Codes (HR)	K-1	K-2	K-3	K-4	K-5	K-6	K-7	K-8	K-9	K-10	K-11	K-12	K-13	K-14	K-15
Experience			■				■	■	■	■					■
Generating alternative ideas	■				■		■					■		■	■
Psychological well-being	■					■	■				■		■	■	
Expertness			■			■			■						
Deference to Org. Culture				■		■				■					
Technological aptitude		■			■								■		
Commitment to Organization	■		■										■		
Self-Discipline				■				■			■				
Ambidexterity									■	■					
Confidence								■				■			

Apart from the above comments, there were points emphasized by fewer participants. Self-discipline, ambidexterity, commitment to the organization, technological aptitude, and adopting the work texture were other codes highlighted in the context of what employees should have.

> "...The rate of those who still want to work remotely has also decreased compared to the first period of the pandemic because you know that establishing a working environment at home requires self-discipline and this is a rare capability. Therefore, many of our colleagues who could not establish this environment at home wanted to come to the company on their own. So, they wanted to escape from the chaos at home and come to the company from their homes." [K-3]
>
> "...generally, although the human resources showed some slack during the first lockdown period due to the pandemic, they were motivated to work again due to various concerns about personal issues such as losing their jobs. Of course, I have made efforts to control this process. [K-8]
>
> "...In such a critical period, we care about an employee profile that strictly obeys the rules set by the management, is more disciplined, and will not cause any negligence. Self-disciplined human resources provide quick adaptation. It keeps the job going without the need for you to put a man on it or put pressure on it. In this period, we understood the importance of this better. If the working system is also designed to be flexible..." [K-11]

In such a process, which has different aspects and is experienced for the first time, a large number of codes for human resources, highlighted by the managers participating in our research, were obtained. As a result of our analysis, the sub-themes and the theme determined based on these codes are shown in Figure 2 below.
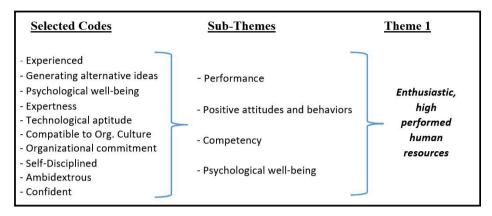
Figure 2: Themes, subthemes, and codes developed through thematic analysis of interview data (Human Resources)

4.5.2. Research Question II: What are the characteristics of a resilient leader?

A pivotal detail that was perceived during the data collection phase in this study was the excess of codes related to leadership. Most participants referred to the leadership characteristics that a leader should have and their perspectives on employees. We saw that some participants emphasized personality factors and experience such as psychological resilience, resilience, and experience. Some of the codes selected from the many codes listed in the leadership axis from the content of the interview are presented in Table 3.

Addressing many issues in the context of leaders' behaviors and abilities, the participants especially emphasized the leader who takes precautions, who is intuitive, able to make quick decisions, and who generates alternatives. Some excerpts from the interview transcripts are given below. Some codes extracted from all the findings are shown in Table 3.

> "As a company that is constantly living in a crisis environment, we stand ready for anything." [K-1]
> "As a company that produces gynecological drugs, we made a quick decision and diversified our products by producing supplements that strengthen the immune system." [K-2]
> "...in such turbulent times, a leader should be able to perceive changes quickly and shape the organizational structure according to these changes." [K-4]
> "...as I said, it's about making quick decisions and being open to innovation, and the more you achieve this, the happier we are." [K-5]
> "Regular planning plays an important role in financial management. However, the leader should do this planning before the problem occurs, not when the problem arises. The leader should introduce this issue into the routine running of the business. Especially, with the pandemic, the importance of this issue has increased." [K-6]
> "When we had some problems with our Chinese suppliers, taking into account the news of the pandemic, we took some precautions by agreeing with alternative domestic suppliers from Germany." [K-7]
> "For example, from time to time, we have seen some companies that are late in the trade of products such as ultraviolet lamps, masks, and cologne make losses." [K-13]
> "...Some concerns during this period led managers to be more careful." [K-15]

Table 3: Selected Codes Regarding Leadership

Selected Codes (Leadership)	K-1	K-2	K-3	K-4	K-5	K-6	K-7	K-8	K-9	K-10	K-11	K-12	K-13	K-14	K-15
Intuitive	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Quick decision-maker		■	■	■	■	■		■		■	■	■	■		
Generating alternative thought and action	■								■			■		■	■
Enabling participation	■			■			■	■	■				■		■
Cares about employee health	■		■			■					■	■	■		■
Supportive		■			■				■		■				■
Seeking solutions to employee problems		■	■				■			■					■
Caring about HR's financial situation	■				■		■				■			■	
Perceptive	■	■	■				■					■		■	
Making employees feel valued	■	■	■				■	■		■					
Psychological well-being	■	■	■				■					■	■		
Experienced				■	■	■					■				■

Other topics that the participants frequently emphasized were how leaders handled the issues related to the employees and from which perspective they viewed the employees, and codes were extracted from these. Here are a few direct quotations (in vivo) on these topics:

> "Since we are a company that provides services to hospitals, we have taken very strict measures. We took a sensitive stance on this issue by strictly following the directions of our institution's medical officer." [K-1]
>
> "We motivated our employees very well and declared that they would not experience any financial loss. We wanted their families and their own health to be very important, and we wanted them to give importance to their personal and professional development during non-working periods." [K-2]
>
> "We thought that our company would not cause financial loss to its employees by completing the state's short-time working allowance support during non-working periods." [K-3]
>
> "We strengthened communication with our employees and tried to create extra communication platforms. Because the greatest need of people was to be valued and listened to... we also organized trainings on anxiety and stress management." [K-3]
>
> "We inevitably tolerated our employees who could not perform well during this period. Moreover, we took care of any equipment need (Laptop, VPN access, etc.) of our employees, so that they do not face any issues with working remotely." [K-4]
>
> "When the pandemic first started in Germany, people had difficulties in the supply of materials such as masks and disinfectants. We bought these products in the most expensive way and distributed them to our employees, we said that they could take them to their homes." [K-7]
>
> "This period once again showed how devotedly our employees work." [K-14]

During the interviews that took place within the scope of the study, the managers touched on many issues related to their approaches in detail. We tried to reflect a small part of them with the

direct quotations above. In their answers, the managers focused more on the leaders' quick decision-making, the measures they took, and the alternatives they produced. Another point that drew attention was the extent to which the leader was interested in the health and problems of the employees and the value he placed on them. Factors such as intuition, experience, awareness of the financial situation, and being cautious were among the other topics emphasized in the interviews. Based on the findings obtained in the context of organizational resilience and COVID-19, the leadership-oriented code, sub-theme, and theme relationship were determined as in Figure 3.
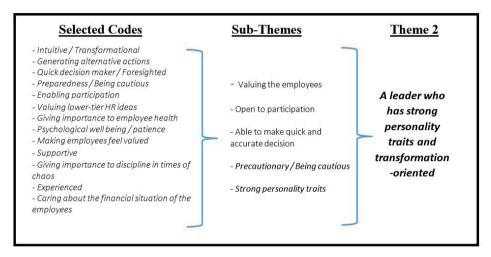

Figure 3: Themes, subthemes, and codes developed through thematic analysis of interview data (Leader)

4.5.3. Research Question III: What are the organizational features for resilient organizations?

In this study, the participants also frequently emphasized the characteristics that businesses should have in relation to organizational resilience. Digitization, infrastructure, and flexibility were the elements that were highlighted as frequently emphasized criteria. Some managers emphasized the importance of some financial ratios such as financial adequacy, and debt-equity ratio. Although most managers emphasized a participatory management structure, it should be noted that there are also managers who emphasized a centralized management structure, especially regarding what should be followed in the pandemic. Table 4 contains the codes of the subjects that the participants emphasized frequently regarding resilience.

Table 4: Selected Codes Regarding Organizational Features

Selected Codes (Organization)	K-1	K-2	K-3	K-4	K-5	K-6	K-7	K-8	K-9	K-10	K-11	K-12	K-13	K-14	K-15
Focused on alternative solutions		■	■		■		■		■		■	■	■	■	■
Low debt ratio / No debt	■		■		■	■		■			■		■	■	
Having Committed Employees	■	■		■		■			■	■			■		
Trust-based communication	■	■		■		■		■	■	■				■	
Early awareness of environmental signals. / Quick response to market	■	■	■				■	■			■			■	
Financial adequacy / financial preparedness	■	■			■	■			■		■	■		■	■
Benefiting from government support and cooperation	■		■		■		■		■		■			■	
Focused on training and development	■	■	■				■					■	■		
Focused on e-commerce /e-marketing and digital transformation		■	■		■			■				■	■		■
To heed customer relations		■	■					■	■		■			■	
Agility		■			■		■	■			■		■		
Centralization			■	■		■			■					■	

The opinions of the managers participating in the research on what commercial organizations as a whole should have in order to increase and maintain resilience are given below. In these opinions, in addition to criteria such as the agility of the system and its financial status, codes such as the commitment of the employees to the organization are included in the findings.

The following are the opinions of the participants of the research on ensuring and maintaining resilience in the context of the whole organization. In these opinions, in addition to criteria such as the agility of the system and its financial status, the codes such as the commitment of the employees to the organization are included in the findings.

Another issue that the participants focused on is the performance of businesses in digital transformation, e-commerce, and digital marketing. It has been frequently emphasized that there is a growing trend towards digital business. Again, fast response to the market is among the codes that emphasize adaptability and agility:

> "We continued to serve our customers with great devotion; our employees even traveled by road between distances such as Ankara and Erzurum, where they should have traveled by plane to minimize the risk of illness. Also, they even entered the operating rooms during the peak of the disease. If we needed to visit doctors and provide training to them, we went regardless of the risks." [K-1]
>
> "We always have a state of financial preparedness, as there are frequent economic difficulties due to the fluctuations in the exchange rate" [K-1]
>
> "In this period, we realized the importance of e-commerce and digital marketing a little more. We had preparations regarding this before the pandemic, but we also had some reservations.

> *But not anymore. We started to work on this issue with the motivation that we should definitely be in this field." [K-3]*
>
> *"According to some signals we received from our European suppliers, there are logistical problems that we have noticed. In the meantime, we are working to turn possible breaks in the supply chain into opportunities." [K-4]*
>
> *"The only thing that needs to be talked about right now is the necessity of systems that can take quick action and adapt quickly to a new situation (adaptation) in all companies, from the largest to the smallest." [K-5]*
>
> *"I think companies will be more careful about finance from now on. No company goes down in a day, and it also doesn't fail due to a single event. There is an infrastructure for this. You need to strengthen your capital, know what you are spending on, and measure the necessary business metrics in the enterprise. There is a saying, "You don't manage what you don't measure", which I find to be very true, and like as a result." [K-6]*
>
> *"With the closure of shopping malls, we have focused on internet sales from our headquarters. Although we are a company that produces sleeping equipment and beds, we have achieved a turnover above our estimates with e-commerce." [K-11]*
>
> *"You need to take quick action in times like these anyway. Being a start-up has been a huge advantage in this sense. Rapid transformations can be very time-consuming as the company grows. It should also be noted that it was a period when we saw the extraordinary success of companies that first entered the market and took quick action. Although Biontech is a small company, they have gained an advantage over giant pharmaceutical companies because they started the production process early. It's a similar situation for the company "Getir". These achievements strongly tell all businesses that they have to be the first in their area of activity. It's important not to be late." [K-13]*

In order to ensure resilience, the participants mentioned a large number of elements such as giving importance to customer relations, training employees, trust-based communication, and employees' commitment. An interesting point in the findings is the emphasis on centralization made by some managers. It has been stated that a centralized management structure can be effective, especially in matters related to financial decisions and the protection of human health. Some excerpts from this topic are presented below.

> *"In crises, centralism rather than polyphony produces faster solutions. At that time, it was not possible for us to make democratic decisions. Therefore, we made sudden decisions and carried out these processes with somewhat centralized decisions. But then, for example, last week, we had one-on-one meetings with our department mates in all departments. We got their thoughts on what they think about the next process" [K-3]*
>
> *"There is a centralized structure. However, this is not a situation related to the pandemic in our country. It's more common in family companies." [K-6]*
>
> *"In the early periods when we started working from home, we had problems with motivation and coordination. We have had a clear stance on this issue." [K-15]*

In the findings, the codes, sub-theme, and theme relationship related to organizational resilience and issues concerning the whole organization during the COVID-19 pandemic period were determined as follows.
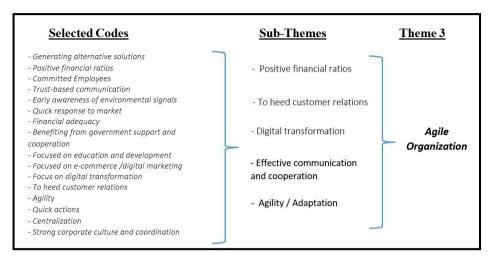
Selected Codes	Sub-Themes	Theme 3
- Generating alternative solutions - Positive financial ratios - Committed Employees - Trust-based communication - Early awareness of environmental signals - Quick response to market - Financial adequacy - Benefiting from government support and cooperation - Focused on education and development - Focused on e-commerce /digital marketing - Focus on digital transformation - To heed customer relations - Agility - Quick actions - Centralization - Strong corporate culture and coordination	- Positive financial ratios - To heed customer relations - Digital transformation - Effective communication and cooperation - Agility / Adaptation	*Agile Organization*

Figure 4: Themes, subthemes, and codes developed through the thematic analysis of the interview data (organization)

5. Results and Discussion

The concept of organizational resilience is a relatively new concept in organizational science and is defined in many studies as the precautionary and recovery capacity of an organization against chaotic work environments. (Kantur & İşeri-Say, 2012; Patricia et al., 2018; Börekçi & Gerçek, 2018; Duchek, 2020). In the literature, it is seen that the relationship of this concept with many different variables has been researched. To give a few examples of these; leadership (Karakose et al., 2020), corporate commitment (Paul et al. 2016), and strategic human resources management can be stated as a few examples (Lengnick-Hall & Beck, 2011). It is observed that the literature on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economic and managerial issues is growing rapidly, and that the relationship between COVID-19 and its effects on socio-economic conditions, businesses, and SMEs have also been studied. (Chetty, 2020; Seetharaman, 2020; Nicola et al., 2020; Verma & Gustafsson, 2020). In the literature with a focus on the COVID-19 pandemic and resilience, it is seen that the first studies are mostly directed at hospitals, and that especially the psychological resilience of health workers is discussed in these studies (Rangachari & Woods, 2020; Legido-Quigley et al., 2020; Barzilay et al., 2020; Heath et al., 2020; Leszcz et al., 2020). It can be said that recently there have been studies on COVID-19 and organizational resilience, and various literature in this direction have also begun (Kutchkertz et al., 2020; Ivanov, 2020, Mills et al., 2020; Obrenovich et al., 2020; Cheema-Fox, 2021; Sakurai ve Chughtai, 2020; Miles ve Shipway, 2020, Salanova, 2020; Rai et al., 2021).

One of the most affected aspects during the COVID-19 pandemic period has been human resources. In this period, how to protect human resources in the face of this highly contagious disease, and under what conditions human resources can continue to perform their work, took its place on the managers' agenda as one of the important problems. Furthermore, the continuation of the performance of the human resources without any decrease has been the focus of top management. Seville (2018) stated that having effective human resources and getting the best output from them is always critical for resilience, especially in times of great stress. However, he also

highlighted that the resilience of these employees may not continue in turbulent times, and hence, mentioned that this should be ensured. In this study, the participants frequently emphasized that the experience of their employees is important in terms of organizational resilience. In connection with this view, they stated that they are making an effort not to lose their human resources capability in this complex period. For example, the fact that most businesses pay full wages to human resources during periods of their employees not-working and also that they organize various online training sessions that will contribute to their individual and professional development by making extra expenses for them can be an indication of this. Tuna and Çelen (2020) stated that every practice related to health in the COVID-19 period will add value to companies. In addition, Tuna and Çelen pointed out that wage, career planning, morale, and motivation practices are extremely important in retaining a qualified workforce, which is in line with the results of our study.

Another factor in the creation of resilient organizations is to emphasize the importance of human resources, which contribute to management and business by generating ideas in the face of different situations. Human resource participation in management has also been a factor that managers care about in terms of building resilience. This issue is one of the frequently underlined criteria in the organizational resilience literature (Lengnick-Hall & Tall, 2011; Bouaziz & Hachicha, 2018). Elements such as the psychological well-being of human resources, self-confidence, and self-discipline are among the main codes of this study regarding human resources, and they are mostly psychologically-based items. These items are themed under the title of mental well-being. In previous studies, there are results for the positive effect of employees with good psychology on the organizational resilience of the company (Pathak & Joshi, 2020; Prayag et al., 2020). Self-confidence is considered as an important advantage, so that psychological depression is not experienced in the face of changes in socio-economic conditions, as well as due to the differences in working conditions (such as working from home), and uncertainties that disrupt human psychology, especially with the anxiety of catching a disease.

Among the human resource-specific findings of the study, codes such as versatility, technological aptitude, experience, and good job knowledge were frequently emphasized by the participants. These features are related to the performance and competence of the human resources and they are not related to turbulent environmental conditions. Kim (2020) determined the positive effect of some variables on person-organization interaction, performance, and human resources on organizational resilience. The findings of this study on human resources show that having human resources capable of contributing to the organization and protecting this human resource both physically and psychologically are key factors for resilient organizations. It should also be noted that efforts to keep the performance of human resources high in times of crisis are important. Seville (2018) emphasized the continuity of resilience in order to keep the performance high in his study.

When we look at the findings on leadership, the aspect of keeping the level of negative impact caused by COVID-19 as low as possible, as well as the managerial skills of the leader such as being prudent, taking fast and correct decisions, and the aspect of the relationship with the employee, such as valuing the employees and their ideas, and being supportive, were highly appreciated by the participants. In parallel with the organizational resilience literature, features such as taking precautions, making fast and accurate decisions, foresight, and prudence were among the codes and sub-themes. Looking at the studies on both organizational resilience and the COVID-19 period, it is seen that similar results have been achieved (Pal et al., 2014; Linnenluecke, 2017; Duchek, 2020). In his study, Stoller (2020) determined the leadership characteristics for the

COVID-19 period as being proactive, having efficient crisis management, being quick, communicating actively, and being realistic as well as optimistic. Kaul et al. (2020) stated the important issues in their work on COVID-19 leadership as communication, mission, task orientation, decision-making in an environment of uncertainty, as well as effective planning, modesty, and agile leadership. Dirani et al. (2020), in their study on leadership competencies during the COVID-19 period, emphasized that in order for an organization to continue on its path, it should have a leader who ensures the financial health of the institution, shares the leadership, is open to communication, enables the human resources to access technology, prioritizes the emotional state of the employees, and provides organizational resilience. Additionally, Antonakis (2021) stated that charismatic leadership characteristics are important for the management of such a crisis. In this study, it can be stated that there are some characteristics of charismatic leadership in the findings obtained for leadership. It has been stated that strong leadership and institutional support are effective in terms of the continuity of human resources capacity at the desired level during pandemic and crisis periods (Mills et al., 2020). In the current study, many codes for leadership were combined and sub-themes were determined such as valuing the employee, being open to participation, making quick and correct decisions (improvisation), taking precautions/prudence, and strong personality traits (foresight, intuition, analytical thinking, empathy). It can be said that these sub-themes are compatible with the relevant literature.

In the organizational structure findings of this study, it has been observed that the participants mentioned many items, but mostly positive financial status, agility and adaptation, the effectiveness of alternative solutions, digital infrastructure, effective communication, and cooperation as the most mentioned items about organizational resilience. Nevertheless, some participants stressed that "centralized management" is used as an element that is not emphasized in organizational resilience, and that this can lead to issues which affect human health and the financial structure of the company. This can be explained as the adoption of crisis management by the participants of the survey in overcoming the extraordinary situation due to COVID-19. However, some studies indicate that a decentralized structure would be better instead of a hierarchical structure in resilient organizations (Duchek, 2020; Obrenovic et al., 2020).

There has been another argument, which has drawn the attention of the participants, that some financial advantages provided by the governments during such pandemic periods (postponing tax payments, reduction in tax rates, and having short-period working allowance, etc.) contribute to the resilience of businesses. The participant who is on the management staff of a business operating in Germany stated that the government gives assurances to businesses in financial matters. Unlike with previous financial crises, it is seen that other European Union countries provide similar support to companies, especially to SMEs. These are the certain measures taken to protect the economies of the countries (Androniceanu, 2020; European Commission, 2021). This result obtained within the scope of our study is compatible with the development of cooperation, which is a dimension for ensuring resilience in the literature.

The findings obtained in the study reveal that digitalization and "digital transformation are important organizational resilience factors. In some studies, this is emphasized, and it is stated that all management strategies should be transferred to digital and virtual environments, and a new customer profile should be envisioned (Bozkurt, 2020; Çengel et al. 2020; Obrenovic et al., 2020). Granig and Hilgarter (2020) emphasized that digital transformation, which they see as a trend, positively affects the business model and therefore resilience. The increasing importance of platform economies with the 2008 economic crisis continues to increase in the COVID-19 pan-

demic. Boh et al. (2020) stated that digitalization, digital transformation, digital technology, digital infrastructure, even IoT devices and sensors have become important resilience points for businesses. Digital transformation, which the participants have frequently focused on in our study, increases its share in the literature as an important resilience issue.

Although it was not mentioned much nor given much importance in the related literature, it became a sub-theme in this study. It was emphasized that especially the debt/equity ratio was an important indicator before the crisis and that most of the participants provided financial flow with their own resources during the period when their turnover decreased. Prayag et al. (2018) revealed that there is a high-level relationship between financial performance and organizational resilience. Similarly, De Carvalho et al. (2016) in their study on businesses that experienced the 2008 economic crisis, revealed that businesses that produce new ideas and transform them into innovations are more resilient organizations.

The concepts of adaptability and agility are two pivotal factors that are frequently stated in the organizational resilience literature. In our study, the participants emphasized the agility and adaptation ability by talking about direct agility and adaptation, and also by talking about issues such as quick response to changes in the market and the effectiveness of alternative ideas. These two issues are the two elements emphasized in almost all organizational resilience studies (Mc Manus et al., 2007; Denyer, 2017; Andersson et al., 2019). The importance of these concepts is that rapidly changing environmental conditions require fast reactions. Concentrating on customer relations is another important finding of the study. It can be said that resilient organizations establish tighter and more sustainable relations with their customers in times of crisis. Andersson et al. (2019) revealed the positive effects of a long-term relationship with customers on the business in their study on a bank. In the findings of this study, it was stated that delays that may occur due to problems in both the supply chain and logistics processes and production should be well explained to customers. In this context, it should be aimed to establish more communication with customers compared to the time before the crisis, thus minimizing negative effects.

It can be said that the findings obtained from this study generally overlap with the literature related to organizational resilience. According to Burnard et al.'s (2018) classification, it is noticeable that the enterprises participating in the research are mostly talent-based and process-based enterprises. The fact that some managers state that it is not possible to predict a pandemic of this level and to make plans for it differs from the planning strategies in the organizational resilience literature. However, the fact that some managers, especially businesses in Turkey, are naturally prepared for crises due to currency-based crises, coincides with the literature on organizational resilience. It has been observed that the businesses participating in the study provide organizational resilience more reactively and that there is no proactive resilience element at some points. According to Hasanhanoğlu (2020), COVID-19 is one of the biggest crises that has emerged after the industrial revolution, and it serves as a test in which businesses will see how effective they are in crisis management. Businesses that are prepared for possible crises with proactive work will more easily overcome this difficult process than businesses that are managed from a reactive perspective. At this point, it is clear that the pre-crisis (proactive) elements such as preparedness, foresight, emergency plans, and risk management mentioned by the participants of this study will increase resilience. Furthermore, as revealed in this research and many studies conducted during the COVID-19 period and the effective use of digital elements is increasingly becoming an important component of resilience. It is an important result of this study that the leader who values the employee and directs the transformation is effective in organizational resilience. In human

resources, it is strongly emphasized in this study that an experienced employee who contributes to the organization with his/her ideas is an important element of resilience.

In this study, the issue of organizational resilience was examined together with the gains from the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is thought that it will contribute to the literature in terms of presenting the gains obtained in such a period, which has never been experienced before. Moreover, it was a study where practitioners could find different business examples for developing resilience. It is suggested that this study, which has a sample of participants from different sector companies, can be carried out in businesses operating in the same sector by researchers who are interested in the subject. Again, by changing the profile of the participants collected from the data (for example, management consultants), it can be possible to achieve different results using different sample selections.

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