

# The Mechanisms of Resilient Organizations in the Context of Family Businesses in Thailand

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## Abstract

This study aimed to explain why organizations are resilient. This qualitative study employed Yin's (2014) explanatory case study method. The family business in Thailand was used as the context of the study because: 1) family business was found to be more resilient than other types of businesses; and 2) the family business is important to the Thai economy. The findings based on 15 cases of family businesses in Thailand explained that the organizations are resilient due to factors created during three periods. 1) The period before the crisis involving management strategies (i.e. strengthening organizational operations; knowledge acquisition and past experience) and manpower strategies (i.e. tonic virtuousness; feelings of affection and bonds among employees). 2) The period of being aware of a crisis, including the factor of mindfulness (i.e. awareness that the organization may be facing a crisis; awareness of the impact of the crisis; awareness of the real situation with understanding; and awareness of the situation based on knowledge acquisition and experience). 3) The period of crisis management involving the factors of management strategies (i.e. property loss mitigation; communication; organizational support; system improvement; and diversified business), manpower strategies (i.e. collaboration of employees; organizational commitment; phasic virtuousness; attention and assistance to employees; and leadership), and monetary strategies. This study also found that the factors during the period before the crisis helped with support during the period of crisis management and after the crisis, thus contributing to the development of resilient organizations.

**Keywords:** Resilient organization, Crisis, Family business, Thailand

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### บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาเชิงคุณภาพนี้ มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่ออธิบายถึงกลไกความเข้มแข็งขององค์กร โดยใช้กรณีศึกษาเพื่ออธิบายของ Yin (2014) ธุรกิจครอบครัวได้ถูกเลือกเป็นบริบทในการศึกษา เพราะ 1) เป็นธุรกิจที่มีความเข้มแข็งมากกว่าธุรกิจอื่น 2) เป็นธุรกิจที่มีความสำคัญต่อเศรษฐกิจไทย ผลการศึกษา จากสิบห้ากรณีธุรกิจครอบครัวในประเทศไทย พบว่า กลไกที่ทำให้องค์กรเข้มแข็งเกิดจากปัจจัยในสาม ช่วงเวลา กล่าวคือ 1) ปัจจัยก่อนวิกฤต คือ การจัดการองค์กร (เช่น การพัฒนาองค์กร) และด้าน บุคคลากร (เช่น คุณธรรมในภาวะปกติ, ความสัมพันธ์ที่ดีในองค์กร) 2) ปัจจัยระหว่างวิกฤต คือ การทราบถึงผลจากวิกฤตที่อาจได้รับ, การทราบถึงผลจากวิกฤต, การทราบถึงสภาพด้วยความเข้าใจ, การทราบถึงสภาพด้วยความรู้และประสบการณ์ 3) ปัจจัยขณะจัดการกับวิกฤต คือ การจัดการองค์กร (เช่น การลดความเสี่ยงของทรัพย์สิน, การสื่อสาร, การให้ความช่วยเหลือทั้งในและระหว่างองค์กร, การพัฒนาระบบองค์กร, การดำเนินธุรกิจที่หลากหลาย) ด้านบุคคลากร (เช่น ความร่วมมือของ บุคคลากร, ความผูกพันธ์ต่อองค์กร, คุณธรรมในภาวะวิกฤต, ความใส่ใจต่อพนักงาน, ผู้นำ) และการ จัดการทางการเงิน ผลการศึกษานี้ยังพบว่า ปัจจัยก่อนวิกฤตช่วยองค์กรในช่วงที่จัดการกับวิกฤตและ หลังวิกฤต ทำให้สามารถเป็นองค์กรที่เข้มแข็งได้

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## Introduction

Organizations are regarded as the center of the economy and civilization (Cameron, 2010). They are the heart of employment and services (i.e. water, food, health, communication systems, financial services, and transportation) on which almost every individual depends on a daily basis (van der Vegt, Essens, Wahlström, & George, 2015). However, organizations tend to be vulnerable because of inevitable crises and unexpected events (van der Vegt et al., 2015). Reports showed that traditional approaches of crisis management including business continuity and crisis recovery does not ensure organizational survivability (Koronis & Ponis, 2018). With the challenge of complexity and interconnection of modern society and economy, the traditional approaches of crisis management were found to be less effective (Koronis & Ponis, 2018). Organizations are required to become resilience to survive this complex environment (Duchek, Raetze, & Scheuch, 2020; Seville, 2017). However, the knowledge of resilient organizations is almost absent in the academic literature. The concept of the resilient organization is embedded in the context of organizational safety and reliability, and organizational responses to external threats and changing environments. Many works on resilient organizations still appear as conceptual frameworks. Particularly in the Thai context, the term resilience can be seen in the Thai philosophy of the sufficiency economy, and the national economic and social development plan of Thailand as it was asserted as the immunity of the Thai people against different kinds of threats (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, n.d.).

This study intended to provide an explanation of why organizations are resilient. In this regard, this paper is organized into four sections. First, we review the literature and provide the meaning of the terms resilience and crisis used in the organizational context. Second, we discuss methodology; in this study, we followed Yin's (2014) explanatory case study method. Multiple cases were used as they helped to enhance vigorous findings (Yin, 2014). In addition, family business was used as the context of the study because family business was found to be more resilient than other types of business and a majority of business in Thailand influenced the Thai economy (Amann & Jaussaud, 2012; Ministry of Industry, 2016; Wailerdsak & Suehiro,

2010). Third, we present the study's findings drawn from different family business cases, and last we offer a discussion and make recommendations.

## Literature Review

At a glance, the terms crisis and resilience connote different concepts and definitions. However, the evidence from the organizational literature (e.g., Seville, 2017; Williams, Gruber, Sutcliffe, Shepherd, & Zhao, 2017) suggests interconnections between crisis and resilience. Crisis researchers (e.g., Comfort, Boin, & Demchak, 2010) have consistently pointed out that the capacity of coordination, flexibility, improvisation, and endurance is the qualification of organizations responding to crisis associated with organizational resilience. Koronis and Ponis (2018, p. 33) asserted that resilience of organization is “inherent crisis management skills”. This is because resilience is a positive occurrence that cannot occur without a negative occurrence such as crisis (Williams et al., 2017).

### Definition of Organizational Resilience

The term resilience suggests different elucidations and employments as the term used in organizational literature has its intellectual roots in various disciplines (e.g., psychology, ecology and engineering; Duchek, 2020). The meanings of the term resilience, therefore, communicate a number of connotations which “can be understood as characteristics of objects, individuals, organizations, and systems” (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2010, p. 334).

Originally, the term resilience was derived from the two Latin words (i.e. resilire and resilio), which mean the “act of rebounding” where re refers to “back” and silire means “to jump or to leap” (Indirli, 2019). In English, the term passed through the middle ages and was used by many intellectuals who led to the construction of modern scientific methods (Indirli, 2019). Since the 19th century, the term resilience has been used as two nouns (i.e. resilience and resiliency), and it has been used in various ways to specify the notions of rebounding, elasticity, and successful adaptation (Indirli, 2019).

At the organizational level, the meaning of the term resilience has been delineated in many ways. For example, the term was defined as “firms' ability to maintain or regain functioning despite a major mishap or in the presence of

continuous stress" (Clément & Rivera, 2017, p. 346); and as "the ability to capitalize on unexpected challenges and change, not just returning to established benchmarks" (Lengnick-Hall, 2008, p. 1160). Based on these definitions, the term resilience entails three characteristics. First, resilience has been characterized as a system. As an organization is created from multifaceted interconnections of elements, the resilience of organizations occurs due to an influence of flexibility and adaptability of different attributes that exist in organizations (Duchek, 2020). Second, resilience is a juxtaposition of positive and negative states. That is, it is a system's capability to absorb changes, recovery, and develop self-renewability that occurs alongside difficulties, crises, disruptions, disasters pressures, and threats (Clément & Rivera, 2017; Li, 2020; Lengnick-Hall, 2008). Third, resilience and business continuity management cannot be used interchangeably. Resilience emphasizes the adaptability of organizations under irregular and unexpected conditions or disturbances related to a chance of losses. On the other hand, BCM is a practice where the intention is to avoid any discontinuity directed to either organizational breakdowns or major losses (Watters, 2014).

In summary, this study describes the term resilience as a successful outcome of organizational adaptability despite a crisis. In general, the term refers to three patterns. They are: a) recovery resilience (i.e. the capability to bounce back to an initial state of well-being or functions); b) transformation resilience (i.e. the capability to flourish or install functional improvement despite adversity); and c) resistant resilience (i.e. the capability to absorb shock and to endure threats without having any fundamental breakdown in structure or performance).

### **Definition of Organizational Crisis**

The term crisis can be considered as an ill-defined concept as it borrows from heterogeneous fields of disciplines—for example, behavioral science, organization studies, political science, and international relations (Bundy, Pfarrer, Short, & Coombs, 2017; Pursiainen, 2018). The meanings of the term crisis have rather been described based on the fields in which the term is used and on the statements of the field experts (Boin, 2004). Boin, 't Hart, and Kuipers (2018, p. 24) have critiqued the meanings of the term crisis grounded on different incidents, such as "natural disasters and environmental threats, financial meltdowns and terrorist attacks, epidemics and exploding factories, infrastructural breakdown and organizational decline."

The term crisis connotes both positive and negative meanings. Few studies, however, have mentioned the term crisis in a positive way. The Greek languages assign the term the meaning of a turning point, which can imply either threats or opportunities (Boin, et al., 2018; Pursiainen, 2018). Shaluf, Ahmadun, and Mat Said (2003), in addition, described the term crisis as a possibility of turning a danger into an opportunity. Nevertheless, many works often associate the term crisis with a negative meaning. For example, the term crisis is often referred to and is interchangeably used as a synonym of words such as catastrophe, deadlock, disaster, mess, pressure, and trouble (Crisis, n.d.). The definition of the term crisis, for example, is described in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary as: "(1) A time of great danger, difficulty or doubt when problems must be solved or important decisions must be made; (2) A time when a problem, a bad situation or an illness is at its worst point" (Bateman & Pridgeon, 2020, p. 367).

In the organizational context, the term crisis is typically linked with the notions of disruption, threats uncertainty, urgency, unpredictability, and unmanageable circumstances (Bundy et al., 2017). Many scholars (e.g., Williams et al., 2017; Gueben-Venière, 2020; Zafari, Biggemann, & Garry, 2020) indicated that the meanings of the term crisis were categorized as crisis as an event and crisis as a process.

Based on the perspective of crisis as an event, the term, for example, was generally defined as non-routine, unanticipated, and inconceivable circumstances (Williams et al., 2017). Similarly, Hermann (1963, p. 64) provided a definition of the term crisis as follows: "(1) threatens high-priority values of the organization, (2) presents a restricted amount of time in which a response can be made, and (3) is unexpected or unanticipated by the organization." Hermann's (1963) definition has been regarded as an influential idea of crisis as many scholars (e.g., Williams et al., 2017; Zafari et al., 2020) evidently have followed and shared many aspects of his definition.

The perspective of crisis as a process, in addition, presents crisis as a developmental process that emerges under the effect of a trigger incident. Turner (1976), for example, conveyed six steps of developmental procedures: (1) a norm or general agreement about dangerous concepts; (2) an incubation period (i.e. the emergence of unnoticeable events that is not aligned with hazardous agreement); (3) a precipitating event (i.e. a condition requiring attention and changes); (4) the

appearance of immediate consequences of failure; (5) rescue and salvage (an initial phase of (unplanned) correction after a breakdown); and (6) completed changes and the establishment of different principles and cultures.

In summary, the term crisis has multiple meanings. It can also imply both positive and negative connotations. However, the term is often described with a negative meaning. In the organizational context, the term crisis typically refers to the concepts of unpredictability, risk, seriousness, and unmanageable circumstances. This study defines the term crisis by following Hermann's (1963, p. 64) definition: "(1) threatens high-priority values of the organization, (2) presents a restricted amount of time in which a response can be made, and (3) is unexpected or unanticipated by the organization." This is because many other definitions were developed by following and sharing many perspectives of Hermann's (1963) definition of crisis.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Approach**

This qualitative study employed Yin's (2014) explanatory case study method. Yin (2014) explained that the objective of explanatory case study is to explicate how or why some conditions occur. This method was considered to be appropriate because it matched the objective of this study, that is, to answer why organizations are resilient.

### **Organizational Selection**

The study was conducted in the context of family businesses in Thailand. Many scholars (e.g., Amann & Jaussaud, 2012; Kachaner, Stalk, & Bloch, 2012) have agreed that the family business is more resilient than other types of organizations, and it is even more effective when it faces an economic crisis. The family business in Thailand, moreover, is regarded as a key agent of accelerators that develops the Thai industries and export expansion (Suehiro, 1997; Wailerdsak & Suehiro, 2010). In Thailand, more than 80% of that are regarded as family business (Ministry of Industry, 2016).

In this regard, the organizations that participated in this study were purposively selected by using four criteria. That is, a) the organization had to be controlled, operated, succeeded, or owned by family members that were related by

blood or marriage, and the family had to own 20% of the stocks of the company; b) the organization had to have operated for at least 10 years; c) the organization had to operate in Thailand; and d) the organization had to be resilient (i.e. the organization has demonstrated a successful outcome of adjustment despite a crisis or crises).

In order to develop robust findings, multiple cases were used to develop the knowledge explaining why the organizations are resilient. A total of 15 organizations matched the selection criteria and consequently were selected to participate in this study. The number of organizations the participated in this study was determined by following Yin's (2014) replication logic. This means that the number of organizations was controlled by literal replication (i.e. similar results) and theoretical replication (i.e. contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons; Yin, 2014). In other words, the researcher can stop recruiting organizations for participation in a study when the data are found to replicate (see Table 1).

### **Sources of Evidence Selection**

This study employed two sources of evidence: interviews and documents. In addition, the data in each case were selected based on the theoretical sampling logic. Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 45) explained theoretical sampling as follows:

Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges.

Following Charmaz's (1990) process of theoretical sampling, each organization that participated in this study was involved in multiple phases of data collection. The journey of the data collection of this study began with making the initial decision to collect the data based on the research problems and questions. In this regard, participants who had knowledge about organizational history and had experience of organizational crises were asked to participate this study. The initial interview questions were such as describe experience about organizational adaptability during crisis; describe reasons explaining why organizational was able to bound back/ capitalize/ withstand despite crisis; describe about the practices led the organization to be able to bound back/ capitalize/ withstand despite crisis. After this step, a memo was used to note the initial codes that emerged. This process allowed the researchers to reevaluate the data and then develop it into focused codes. Strauss and Corbin's axial coding was additionally employed as a method of data analysis as its framework

helped to extend a vision of the findings (Charmaz, 2006). Next, theoretical sampling was employed in order to generate and refine the concepts of the findings. In this regard, the researchers reentered the field in order to collect more data, which involved interviewing participants and collecting documents. The decisions regarding the data collection in this phase were controlled by the concepts that previously emerged. The researchers, in fact, had to repeat this process for several times until they found that no new data for each case could be found.

**Table 1** Core cases of resilient organizations

Case	Business Sector	Crisis	Size	Number of Employees (Persons)	Age (Years)
Case A	Real Estate Development	The Economic Crisis in 1997	Large	101-500	21 - 30
Case B	Manufacturer of Glass and Glass Sheets	The Economic Crisis in 1997	Large	101-500	31 - 40
Case C	Manufacturer of Glass and Glass Sheets	The Great Flood in 2011	Large	101-500	31 - 40
Case D	Construction Services	The Economic Crisis in 1997	Large	501 -1,000	41 - 50
Case E	Transportation & Logistics	The Great Flood in 2011	Small	50-100	21 - 30
Case F	Cold Chain & Home Appliances	The Great Flood in 2011	Small	01-50	01 - 10
Case H	Food & Beverages	The Great Flood in 2011	Small	01-50	01 - 10
Case I	Agricultural Production	The Great Flood in 1993	Small	101- 500	21-30
Case J	Fashion	Increasing Rental Fee	Small	01-50	01 - 10
Case K	Media & Publishing	Digital Disruption	Small	01-50	01 - 10
Case L	Industrial Material & Machine	The Great Flood in 2011	Medium	100-500	21 - 30
Case M	Food & Beverages	The Great Flood in 2011	Small	01-50	11 - 20
Case N	Construction Services	The Economic Crisis in 1997	Small	01-50	11 - 20
Case O	Industrial Material & Machine	The Great Flood in 2011	Small	01-50	11 - 20
Case P	Cold Chain & Home Appliances	The Political Riot in 2010	Small	01-50	01 - 10

### **Data Analysis Strategy**

This study involved two level of data analysis—individual case and cross-case analysis. The data in each case of the organization were analyzed following Yin's (2011) five phases of data analysis and interaction. First was compiling the data. The data of this study were kept in a database and a chain of evidence was maintained. Second was disassembling. This phase is when the initial codes were developed as the researchers broke down the data into pieces or small parts and assigned labels to the pieces of data (Charmaz, 2006; Yin, 2011). Third was reassembling (and arraying). In this process, the data were reevaluated and rearranged into practical themes or focused codes (Charmaz, 2006; Yin, 2011). Fourth was interpretation. At this stage, Strauss and Corbin's axial coding strategy was employed in order to help to extend the vision of the findings. The focused codes were reorganized into patterns of situations forming the studied phenomena, actions/interactions, and outcomes of the actions/interactions (Charmaz, 2006). Fifth was the conclusion. The result of this stage was an individual case report, which represented the study's implications (Yin, 2011). Following individual case analysis and report writing, a cross-case report was created, which meant compiling and organizing the replicated findings from the individual cases (Yin, 2014).

### **Research Ethics**

This study followed the moral standards for research practices of deRoche and deRoche (2010). Therefore, the data were collected with permission of both the organizations and the participants. They were clearly informed about the research purposes, the procedures, and the benefits, risks, and inconveniences. Pseudonyms were used to refer to both the organizations and participants in order to maintain the participants' privacy and organizational competitiveness. This study ensured accuracy of data and findings by closely following Yin's (2014) construct of how to conduct case study research. Data distortion was minimized by incorporating open questions, replication logic in multiple case study, using a case database, case protocol, multiple evidence, and a chain of evidence.

## Findings

The data based on the fifteen cases of organizations reported that these organizations were resilient due to the factors that occurred during three periods: the factors that occurred during the period before the crisis, being aware of the crisis, and crisis management.

### Factors Occurring during the Period of Before the Crisis

This study found that during the period before the crisis, the organizations concentrated on two categories of management strategy and manpower strategy.

#### 1. Management Strategy

In this period, the organizations focused on improving the performance of the organizations. The organizations implemented the following strategies.

##### 1.1 Strengthening Organizational Operations

Based on the findings of this study, the organizations emphasized the quality of products and services, and the activities of human resource development and human resource development.

The quality of products and services was mentioned as an important part of many organizations as they agreed that the quality of products and services was a key to customers' satisfaction. The organizational document from case B was described as follows: "We gathered engineering knowledge in many forms...You can be confident that the quality of our glass is accepted in the country and internationally". The service organization mentioned that customers were put at the center. Interviewee#1, restaurateur from case H, further stated: "We provide services, and we train people that customers are our god." As well, Interviewee#2, Organizational Leader from case E, asserted his opinion published the organizational document: "The heart of a bus service provider is to provide services with the highest satisfaction of users."

The organizations, moreover, manifested their attentiveness to human resource development and management. Interviewee#2, Organizational Leader from case E, stated his opinion, published in the organizational document, as follows: "Service work management is key for human resource development, since business

operations or organizational growth rely on ‘humans’ to operate or practice.” The organization, therefore, arranges activities to develop its people. Interviewee#2, Organizational Leader from Case E, related the following: “I called them in for lectures, meetings, and trainings...We stated rules...Everybody practiced this until they got used to it. It had become their habit...It changes from duty to responsibility.”

In addition, the organizations placed emphasis on people operation. Job rotation was expressed as an important element that supports business cost control and operation. Interviewee#3, chef and wife of the restaurateur from case H, asserted the following: “Family is very important. Our business is still running because we can manage all by ourselves.” Interviewee#1, restaurateur from case H, added: “This helps link different functions together...We don’t have to hire many people...This is considered a low number.”

## 1.2 Knowledge Acquisition and Past Experience

In this study, knowledge was collected in the form personal knowledge. Interviewee#4, Head of the Purchasing Department from case B, stated the following: “Some were engineers, some got experience, like I said. It flooded here often, but it has never been this much. Many people have experience.” Interviewee#5, President and Managing Director from case D, added: “I was with them for eight years. I had knowledge. I knew how to take notes. I knew one day we would enter the market...We also learned how to do research work from them.”

## 2. Manpower Strategy

During this period, employees as organizational members placed importance on tonic virtuousness and feelings of affection, and bonds among employees was in evidence.

### 2.1 Tonic Virtuousness

Tonic virtuousness was described as the excellent behaviors the occurred in general conditions (Bright, Cameron, & Caza, 2006). The study consistently showed the virtue of sufficiency and honesty.

The evidence from many cases defined sufficiency in terms of moderation; that is, being appropriate—not too much and not too little. Interviewee#6, Purchasing

Vice President from case D, related that the work practices were complied with the notion of sufficiency.

We received a lot of work, but we're not greedy. We worked as much as our tools and equipment allow us to...Many asked us why we couldn't do work here and there, why we didn't invest more. We were enough. We invested in what we could control only.

Interviewee#7, Managing Director from case I, added: "We had a policy to manage risk and kept it at a low level. We didn't intend to make high profits...We expanded our business based on cumulative income and risk assessment."

Honesty as being truthful and sincere is a virtue that was held by many organizations. It was a behavior that the organizations held towards their trade partners and other associated people. Interviewee#8, Accounting and Human Resources Manager from case D, stated the following in this connection: "We always show trust and honesty to our suppliers. That has been our practice." This is because "[t]he first head [the president] is the boss. Whatever he says, we need to do. If he isn't honest, just him alone, his subordinates can't grow. I think it's because of him." In the same way, Interviewee#7, Managing Director from case I, described honesty in the organization as follows:

We are honest, even with the company that we manage. When the time is due and suppliers haven't collected money from us, I call them in to get money from us...This earns us credit, and everyone trusts us. We always buy produce based on the prices that we guarantee.

## 2.2 Feelings of Affection and Bonds among Employees

Feelings of affection and bonds among employees were in evidence in almost all of the cases. This referred to being friendly towards other employees in the organizations and consequently caused positive bonding, tendering, and fondness among employees in the organizations, which were regarded a relationship like a brother-sister and family. Interviewee#9, Factory 1 Production Manager from case I, stated: "We treat each other like a small family." By the same token, Interviewee#10, Legal Affairs Manager from case A, commented: "It's like the organization functions

like a family...That includes the good atmosphere of the organization, good subordinates and colleagues both above you and below you."

### **Factors Occurred in the Period of Being Aware of Crisis**

The evidence from many cases showed that the organizations were able to show a successful outcome of adjustment despite the crisis because organizational members were able to be mindful or aware of the crisis, odd events, and signs of breakdowns. This study found that crisis was apparent in four forms.

#### **1. Awareness That the Organization May Face a Crisis**

Many participants described this type of awareness as follows: "I foresaw that the trend was changing...We need to keep up with news in the print media industry" (Interviewee#11, Owner of the Printing House, case K). Interviewee#2, Organizational Leader from case E, furthermore mentioned the following: "The news said that the floods were coming from Nakhon Sawan at that time. We were like the first stop to be hit because we are located near Bang Kruay." Interviewee#12, Organizational Leader from case F, added: "Prior to that, there were announcements and warnings...They gave us information."

#### **2. Awareness of the Impact of the Crisis**

In many cases, organizational members were aware of the crisis because "[t]here was no work, so we gathered in the office and did nothing" (Interviewee#13, Structure Division Vice President from case D). Interviewee#10, Legal Affairs Manager from case A, then shared a similar experience: "The boss of the organization knew that the business was impacted, so he called a meeting to notify everyone...Then, they informed the staff. The meeting allowed us to gather information." Likewise, Interviewee#14, Factory Manager from case B, added: "This affected every company. The economy slowed down, and orders were pending...The executives talked to us about the economy, that it was bad like that. They asked how they could help sustain the company."

#### **3. Awareness of the Real Situation with Understanding**

Interviewee#2, Organizational Leader from case E narrated his experience as follows: "We kept up with the situation at all times...After we got the news, we went

to look on the Mahasawat side. We looked at the floods, and assessed that we wouldn't survive." Indifferently, Interviewee#15, General Manager from case L, explained: "We sent staff to evaluate the situation, and found that it was approaching us... We made a decision. We let the staff know, and called a meeting."

#### 4. Awareness of the Situation Based on Knowledge and Experience

The participants narrated that their awareness of the crisis was grounded in their knowledge and experience. Interviewee#2, Organizational Leader from case E, for example, stated the following in this regard: "We had experience. We looked at what others built to block the water. No matter how hard we tried, we didn't survive." Likewise, Interviewee#1, restaurateur from case H, shared his experience: "In 2011, Nakhon Sawan was badly flooded. I told the chef and everybody to be prepared, as we were flooded in 1995 before, right? In 1993 and 1995, our houses were severely damaged, as we didn't have much blockage."

### **The Factors Occurring during the Period of the Crisis Management**

In the face of the crisis, the organizations concentrated on three groups of strategies to respond and mitigate the consequences of the crisis.

#### 1. Monetary Strategy

Most of the organizations were negatively impacted by monetary problems. However, these organizations were able to adjust despite the crisis because they emphasized financial savings, low operational costs, and handling financial problems.

##### 1.1 Financial Savings

The organizations reported that they were able to rely on their financial savings during the crisis due to the virtue of sufficiency generally complied with in their organizations before the crisis. Interviewee#6, Marketing Vice President from case D, further explained the reason for this in the following: "We had money that we saved and didn't spend on anything...People had problems because they got money and took it out to invest in other things...We didn't do that. We had enough savings, which allowed us to last longer." Likewise, Interviewee#7, Managing Director from case I, related the following: "We traded before. There was a factory that rented a

small space there, but if it opened as a new factory, they wouldn't survive. We had a foundation of some sort of revenue."

### 1.2 Low Operational Costs

The organizations were able to withstand the crisis because they had low operational costs. Interviewee#1, restaurateur from case H, explained as follows: "Our cost is low. One reason why it is low is that we run it as a family business." Interviewee#12, Organizational Leader from case F, then stated: "The organization is not one of a big size, so all of the expenses were minimal." Interviewee#11, Owner of the Printing House from case K, as well narrated the reason for his business survival: "We had very few people, so our costs were low. As for production costs, they were about the same, but our operational costs were lower."

### 1.3 Handling Financial Problems

Many organizations' financial conditions were affected by the crisis. The participants described their organizations' approaches to handling financial problems as follows.

First was to generate revenue. Interviewee#16, Organization Chairman from case A, raised an example in the published organizational document: "We needed to increase revenue by expanding our target group to include group D, which was people commuting by bus. We set up stalls on the sidewalk for renters to sell inexpensive stuff." In the same way, Interviewee#5, President and Managing Director from case D, narrated: "We sought other work. We tried to find work to do...I got it for the price that almost wasn't profitable, but it gave us some money to circulate for 2-3 years."

Second was to cut costs. Interviewee#17, Marketing Manager from case A, offered an example: "In the crisis, everyone tried to be economical. They cut down on unnecessary expenses." Interviewee#13, Structure Division Vice President from case D, added: "The executives tried to ensure that the company survived, so they reduced salaries. Those at the executive level got a salary cut."

Third was to deduct debts. Interviewee#16, Organization Chairman from case A, for example, explained in the published organizational document the following: "Eventually, we got money from selling corporate bonds and we used it to pay for our debt. Our business didn't have to bear that cost." Interviewee#7,

Managing Director from case I, further supported: “Later we negotiated with the Thai Credit Guarantee Corporation to support us. We had to manage ourselves, because the interest was high. After that, we refinanced with other banks as well in order to reduce our loan.”

## 2. Manpower Strategy

Many organizations reported that human resources were a factor that helped the organizations in the face of the crisis. The details of the strategies were discussed below.

### 2.1 Collaboration of Employees

In the face of the crisis, many organizations depended on the collaboration of employees, which was rooted in feelings of affection and bonds among the employees. Interviewee#18, Factory 2 Production Manager from case I, gave the following example:

In a crisis, it was easy for us all to give up...We could get a salary from other places. It was easy. But why did we have to stay?...we are a family...a team, and we walk together...Everyone collaborated. The company called them in, and they showed up.

In a like manner, Interviewee#31, Accounting Manager from case O, shared her experience: “Our staff is like a family, helping one another and the boss. They have been with us for 10-20 years. At our company, the staff has been working for 10-20 years...In a crisis, everyone collaborates, be it production or administration.”

### 2.2 Organizational Commitment

In this study, organizational commitment refers to a feeling of attachment and affection for an organization. Interviewee#8, Accounting and Human Resources Manager from case B, shared her opinions: “I think the company is lucky to have staff and subordinates who love their organization.” Interviewee#4, Head of the Purchasing Department from case B, additionally described his feelings as follows:

Before 1997, we lived like a family. The president mingled with us like father and sons...Father cares about sons. Sons care about father. We

would never leave; we would support the company to live on...This becomes a relationship in which everybody helps each other.

Similarly, Interviewee#19, Purchasing Vice President from case D, added: "Those executives got many offers...But everyone thought about their love for the organization." Interviewee#6, Marketing Vice President from case D, as well revealed a staff member's perspective: "It's like a family. When there's a task to do, we all help without thinking of the benefit...They [the group of organization leaders] are generous and supportive. It all comes from the heart."

### 2.3 Phasic Virtuousness

Phasic virtuousness was described in terms of the excellent behaviors that occurred in a specific condition such as shocks or unexpected events (Bright et al., 2006). In this study, the organizational members frequently manifested the virtue of a fighting attitude and acceptance and retaining a cheerful attitude.

A fighting attitude, in this context, refers to a feeling of continuous efforts in dealing with difficulty. Interviewee#4, Head of the Purchasing Department from case B, commented as follows: "Here, the boss says every day that we fight, so we [employees] fight." Interviewee#20, Station Master from case E, shared a similar idea: "If you ask me if we were hurt, we were, but we fought, and didn't stop at all. If we stopped, we would die. We had to get up and fight...If we didn't fight, we would fail, completely."

Acceptance and retaining a cheerful attitude, in this study, was described as the individuals' ability to be aware of changes and letting go of feelings of attachment. This subsequently enabled the individuals to be positive and present in the face of the crisis. Interviewee#21, Human Resources Officer from case A, narrated the following: "We saw that the executives were cheerful, so we trusted that the organization would survive the crisis." This was similar to case H as Interviewee#1, restaurateur, stated that he "turned a crisis into an opportunity" by finding fun in it, and thinking that it was an experience that he could not find elsewhere.

### 2.4 Attention to and Assistance with Employees

The study showed that many organization leaders provided attention and assistance to the employees in the face of the crisis. Interviewee#22, Station Master

from case E, narrated her experience at that time: “[The organizational leader] was nice. He took care of us well, and managed everything well. He cared about the subordinates. He looked after us, like that. He didn’t leave us at all.” In a like manner, Interviewee#15, General Manager from case L, described the assistance as follows: “We never neglected our workers. That is, we tried to rescue our staff first. If they were short of rice or food, or if they had any problems that the company could help with, we would help.”

## 2.5 Leadership

The study showed that the leaders played an important role in a face of the crisis. Interviewee#23, Station Master from case E, narrated her experience: “Everything was OK thanks to the organization leaders, because they are good leaders. They tell us when we have to do something.” Interviewee#24, Station Master from case E, added: “He [the organizational leader] would know what the problem was, so he gave us orders, and we followed them.” Interviewee#15, General Manager, furthermore offered the following: “When it comes to management and leadership, the manager of the factory is definitely the key to guiding everyone in terms of how to manage problems.”

## 3. Management Strategy

The evidence from this study revealed that most of the organizations responded and mitigated the consequences of the crisis by depending on management strategies. The details of the strategies are described below.

### 3.1 Property Loss Mitigation

The study found that most of the organizations lessened the impact of property losses by implementing prevention. In the flood crisis, the organizations prevented their losses by moving office belongings and products to a higher place. Interviewee#25, Engineer from case C, related his experience in the following: “Products were not damaged because they were in the cargo and were not wet. We moved them to a higher place, especially those sensitive to water.” Interviewee#2, Organizational Leader from case E, also added: “Company vehicles, rental vehicles, and others had to be parked in a higher area.” The organizations were prevented

from the flood by building a strong barrier. Interviewee#4, Head of the Purchasing Department from case C, recalled his experience in the following:

We needed to prepare and build blockage before the water came...We planned to build glass walls, so we had to see how thick they were, and do calculations. The glass had to be thick enough to sustain the water pressure. Silicone had to be used to seal and hold everything together, and to prevent leakages.

### 3.2 Communication

Communication refers to the information transfer between the employees to ensure efficiency crisis management. Interviewee#4, Head of the Purchasing Department from case C, discussed the way of communication during the crisis as follows: "We communicated, I think through walkie-talkie. We talked and coordinated... and evaluated the situation all the time, because the water rose and receded differently on each day." In the same way, Interviewee#23, Station Master from case E, informed: "They communicated to us when the water would rise or fall. They communicated everything they could to us."

### 3.3 Organizational Support

The study demonstrated that the organizations were able to handle the crisis as they received support from their trade partners and other branches within their organizations. Interviewee#26, CEO and daughter of the founder from case C, for example, stated that the organization was able to prevent flood because "we ordered the other branch - that factory - to support us with labor and provide us with equipment." In a like manner, Interviewee#15, General Manager from case I, stated that products were continuously manufactured in its other branch. He indicated: "That factory was the main support for the other one that was flooded, in terms of human resources and production capacity." In addition, Interviewee#26, CEO and daughter of the founder from case C, related about the support from the organization's trade partner in the following:

The president keeps his word...The reputation we had built before the crisis benefited us during the crisis. Many companies gave us a chance, and

we moved on with our capacity. We negotiated based on our capacity. For quality, we only accepted the work that we could do.

Further, Interviewee#7, Managing Director from case I, explained the following: "They [the organization's business partners] reported the situation and sent photos. They explained to them [customers] all that had happened...We control our quality, and we are honest. We are frank with customers. During the crisis, our customers understood."

### 3.4 System Improvement

Many organizations in the crisis took opportunities to improve their operational systems. Interviewee#27, Head of Sales from case M, mentioned the following: "We advanced our products so that the customers chose to buy more from us. That was an opportunity to improve ourselves. We helped one another monitor sales and sell." Likewise, Interviewee#5, President and Managing Director from case D, related about the opportunity that the organization received from the crisis: "We prepared especially research and the development of foundation technology to acquire expertise, so we could attract the market again."

### 3.5 Diversified Business

Many organizations in this study confirmed that they were able to endure the crisis because they had a variety of customers. Interviewee#28, Leader of the Organization from case O, explained as follows: "We had different kinds of customers because they were from the industrial sector. We could survive. In the end, we survived, but our sales might be lower." Interviewee#12, Organizational Leader from case P, gave a similar reason in the following:

We adjusted our work plan to provide services in the province. If you ask if we got 100% of the revenue back, no we didn't get the whole back. This is because 70% of our sales depends on customers in Bangkok, while the other 30% on customers in the province.

## Consequences after the Crisis

With these actions, the organizations reported that they were able to adjust despite the crisis. They received continuance of customers and employees resuming normal work.

### 1. Continuance of Customers

After the crisis, many organizations reported that the customers continued to use the organizations' products and services. Interviewee#29, Sales from case M, stated as follows: "When we got through the crisis, our customers came back to us, because they were confident about the quality of the desserts that we offered." Interviewee#30, Passenger of Non-Ac Mini Shuttle Buses from case E, similarly shared the following:

Whatever we see that is not good or not safe, we'll tell them...They listen to us, and don't get angry to the point that they can't look at each other. They ensure safety very well. We can feel that they provide excellent services, so we choose to ride with them although there are other buses.

Additionally, Interviewee#1, restaurateur from case H, stated the following: "There are people who love our place. We restored the place—we had to do our best. Often, customers called to ask when we would open, and if we were open...We have all along told our customers that they are god."

### 2. Employees Resuming Normal Work

After the crisis, many organizations reported that their employees resumed normal work. Interviewee#18, Factory 2 Production Manager from case I, further explained: "Everyone has to help with this and that, or for our organization which is our big family to move forward." Interviewee#24, Station Master from case I, similarly mentioned: "Everybody came back. Everyone is with us. They came back because we helped each other... He [the organizational leader] cares and pays attention to us." Likewise, Interviewee#1, restaurateur from case H, gave the following reason: "Our staff lives more like a family. The waiters came back to us...During the floods, those who came to see us got free food and a place to sleep."

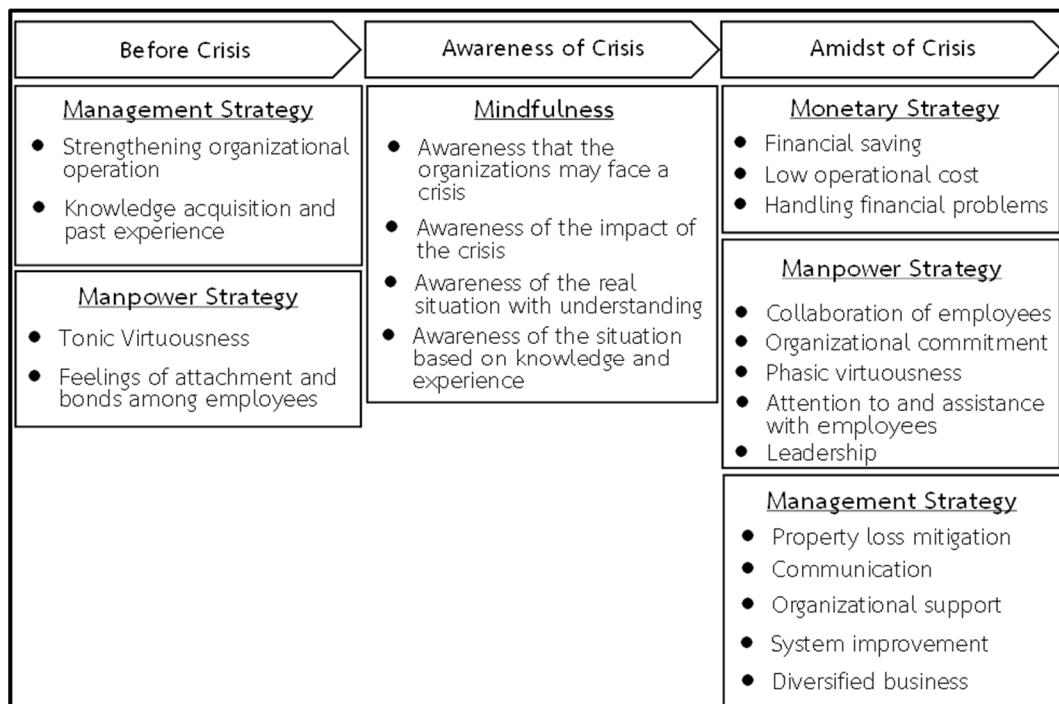
## Discussion and Recommendations

### Discussion

Crisis is considered as unpredictable threats to organizational values which require quick responses of organizations (Hermann, 1963). However, the organizations evidently managed to survive as they showed a successful outcome of organizational adaptability despite a crisis. These organizations, in fact, did not survived by following

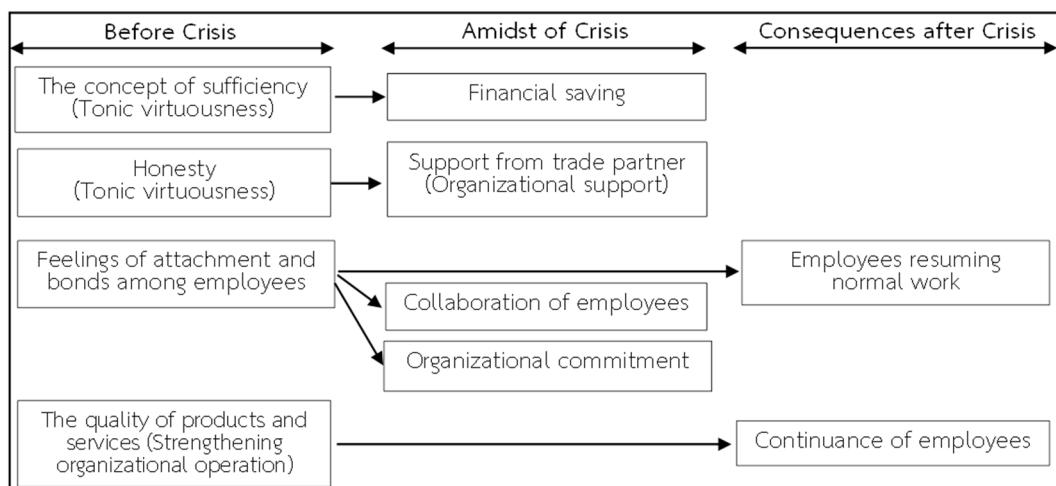
the principle of business continuity management. Watters (2014) explained that business continuity management aims to carry on business operations by keeping away from disruption and failure. Therefore, the principle put important to assess scenario risks and business recovery management (Watters, 2014). The study found that resilient organizations are created by the factors occurring during three periods—before the crisis, awareness of the crisis, and crisis management. The organizations were able to survive the crises due to four groups of strategic factors (i.e. mindfulness, manpower, management, money related) scattered throughout these three periods. Based on the findings of this study, the key factors explaining resilient organizations were depicted as a model (see Figure 1). This indicates that organizations are able to be resilient when they place importance on mindfulness (i.e. awareness of the crisis, odd events, and signs of breakdowns); manpower (i.e. emphasis on affection, collaboration, organizational commitment, and virtuousness); management (i.e. emphasis on strengthening organizational operations, knowledge acquisition, and crisis mitigation); and money related (i.e. emphasis on financial savings, low operational costs, and handling financial problems).

**Figure 1** Summary of the key factors explaining resilient organizations



In addition, the findings of the study also suggests that the factors during the period before the crisis (i.e. sufficiency and honesty as tonic virtuousness, and feelings of affection and bonds among the employees) had respectively a connection with other factors (i.e. financial savings, support from trade partners, collaboration, and organizational commitment) when the organizations were in the face of the crisis and after the crisis (i.e. continuance of customers and employees resuming normal work). As showed in Figure 2, the model demonstrates the role of factors occurring during the period before the crisis in buffering the organizations against crises and supporting the organizations after crises.

**Figure 2** The factors occurring during the period before the crisis consistently buffered the organizations against crises and supported these organizations after crises



### Recommendations

This study recommends that organizations develop a resilient organization by emphasizing the following strategies. First emphasis should be placed on management and manpower strategies before the crisis. The study showed that organizational actions included management strategies (i.e. strengthening organizational operations; knowledge acquisition and past experience) and manpower strategies (i.e. tonic virtuousness and feelings of affection and bonds among employees) as they helped to support the organizations when they encountered the

crises and after the crises. Therefore, it is necessary for organizations to focus on activities that emphasize human resource development, human resource management, knowledge acquisition and management, the quality of products and services, tonic virtuousness, and creating affection and positive relationships among employees.

Second emphasis should be placed on mindfulness. That means the capabilities of the organization's members to be aware of crises. Scholars (for example, Vogus, 2012; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006) have explained that mindfulness is collective attention to context for detecting the details of failure in an organization. Mindfulness, therefore, is suggested as a way that organizational members process information and become actively aware of a crisis, odd events, and signs of breakdowns in an organization (Vogus, 2012).

Third, emphasis should be placed on management, manpower, and monetary strategies in the face of a crisis. The evidence from this study demonstrated that the organizations were able to cope with the crises by incorporating management strategies (i.e. property loss mitigation; communication; organizational support; system improvement; and a diversified business), manpower strategies (i.e. collaboration of employees; organizational commitment; phasic virtuousness; attention and assistance to employees; and leadership), and monetary strategies (i.e. emphasis on financial savings and handling financial problems). Therefore, in the face of a crisis, organizations are recommended to focus on the factors of organizational management, manpower, and money in order to lessen the impacts of a crisis.

## **Limitation and Future Research**

### **Limitation**

This qualitative study employed Yin's (2014) explanatory case study method in order to answer why organizations are resilient. Therefore, the findings and recommendations of this study can only apply to a specific context. In this case, they were applicable to the context of family businesses in Thailand. In addition, the researchers could access to limited data as a few number of participants have experiences and knowledge of organizational adaptability despite a crisis, and some of

them dropped out or refused to provide additional information when the researchers asked for their permission to collect more data.

### Future Research

This study recommends that scholars further research other contexts of organizations as they enhance the degree of generalization, as well as apply these explanatory findings in the organizational context in order to assess their applicability in the real world context.

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