proposal

by nyasha chiwawa

Compulsory Cover Letter

Article title: Relational-based Resilience of a Public University: A Case of Losing a Library by Mzuzu University in Malawi

Significance of work:

Despite the growing interest on organisational resilience, there is limited research that has focused directly on the resilience of a university library. Mzuzu University (Mzuni) in Malawi lost its library to fire in 2015. To date, no study has delved into the nature of organisational resilience displayed by the public university and its library. This study explore the views of Heads of Departments on the capabilities of organisational resilience exhibited by Mzuni following the loss of the university library.

There is a compelling need for university leaders and librarians to understand the nature of organisational resilience in a public university for the library, but also how resilience is achieved in practice following an adversity such as loss of a university library to fire.

The article proposes an integrative and multi-level framework of capabilities of organisational resilience for the university library, useful to prospectively guide university librarians and human resource practitioners in cultivating capabilities of general and specified resilience.

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Relational-based Resilience of a Public University: A Case of Losing a Library by Mzuzu University in Malawi

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Abstract

Following the destruction of the university library by fire in 2015, this retrospective study explore the nature of capabilities of organisational resilience exhibited by Mzuzu University (Mzuni) - as perceived by Heads of Departments (HoDs) in the university. Limited research has focused on what resilient university libraries actually do and how organisational resilience is actually achieved in practice. Eight HoDs selected using stratified random sampling were interviewed and data analyzed using content analysis.

Results reveal that the nature of organisational resilience – quick restoration of library services with little disturbance to the academic calendar -exhibited by Mzuni lacked a proactive approach. Predominantly, Mzuni relied on unexpected, external and relational-based capabilities to improvise library services. An interplay of various organisational, individual and relational capabilities was cardinal in the improvisation of library services. However, ambidextrous structure, culture and leadership, and pursuit of systemic resilience are fundamental if Mzuni is to be truly resilient.

The integrative framework of proactive organisational resilience proposed in this study is insightful for librarians, leaders of public universities and HR practitioners to build prospectively the composite capability of organisational resilience for the university library before an adversity occurs.

Key words: Resilient library, Organisational resilience, Framework of proactive organisational resilience, Relational-based resilience

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Resilience is a strategic asset for a university library as disruption is prevalent in the contemporary university. Bodenheimer (2018:365) is disenchanted that to "learn about resilience and how to cultivate resilience in libraries, one must read in the psychology and management literature to extrapolate what might be useful". This brings to the fore the challenge of how university librarians embed resilience-enhancing practices in the day-to-day library services.

Mzuzu University (Mzuni) in Malawi lost its university library due to electric fire in the early hours of 18 December in 2015 (Chavula, 2015). In the words of Hayes (2016:1), "[the library] building and all of its books — around 45,000 volumes — were consumed, along with the equipment and furniture". Re-building and re-stocking a university library is not an easy and quick fix. As a central service, the library at Mzuni served 4000 undergraduate students, 187 postgraduate students, and academics from four diverse faculties, namely Environmental Sciences, Tourism and Hospitality Management, Information Science and Communications, and Health Sciences. Additionally, the library was also useful to four centres, including the Centre for Open and Distance Learning, the Centre for Water and Sanitation, the Centre for Security Studies, and the Testing and Training Centre for Renewable Energy and Technologies (Mzuzu University, 2015:7).

In Malawi, loss of a public university library due to fire is a rarity. The type of disruptions or challenges which are common to the majority of university leaders and students emanate from students and academic protests, pressure to produce more with few resources, demand to improve the quality of education but also to deal with effects of massifying the university education (Chawinga and Zozie, 2016). To be apt, university leaders in Malawi grapple with challenges of running chronically under-funded and over-enrolled public universities (Chawinga and Zozie, 2016). Mushemeza (2016:236) is vehement that "government investment in several African public universities is dwindling against the pressure to improve [both access and] quality". McManus, Seville, Brunsdon, and Vargo (2007:1) are mindful that "many organizations that are devastated simply never reopen again; others evolve so radically that they are hard to recognize from their pre-crisis form". This raise

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questions of how Mzuni responded to the loss of the university library in December 2015.

2.0   RESEARCH PROBLEM

Since 2015 when fire destroyed the library at Mzuni, no study has explored the micro-level interactions and processes to reveal the nature of capabilities or lack thereof displayed by the university or the library in the endeavour to actually bounce back or bounce forward.

Extant literature on organisational resilience and university libraries reveal three startling gaps in research. First, what resilient organisations actually do and how organisational resilience is actually achieved in practice is still unclear (Giustiniano, Stewart, Clegg, Miguel, Cunha and Rego, 2018:3). Only few studies have investigated resilience capabilities in an organisation (Duchek, 2019:1).

Second, the growing body of research on what generally makes a university resilient has not specifically focused on the context of the library (Bodenheimer, 2018; Canney, 2012). This contextual gap is interesting as context in which organisational resilience is enacted alter not just its development but also realization. The adversity at Mzuni in Malawi provides a relevant context to explore the nature of micro-level processes and capabilities, which constitute organisational resilience. It is salient to take cognizance that most organisational researchers of resilience have focused on high-risk organizations such as fire, hospital, police and the military (Giustiniano et al., 2018:3). Others such as Boreckci, Rofcanin and Gurbuz (2011) have investigated the influence of relational dynamics on organisational resilience in the private sector. Reinmoeller and Baardwijk (2005) revealed that the most resilient organisations in the business sector orchestrate a continuous balance of four innovative strategies (e.g. exploration, knowledge management, entrepreneurship, cooperation).

Third, there are little insights into the inner workings of organisational resilience (Giustiniano et al., 2018). Few researchers have tried to describe the resilience process in detail. In the parlance of Ducheck (2019:5), "we do not really know if resilience is the result of designed processes or perhaps the outcome of

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improvisation and luck". To surmise it all, the lack of focus on the context of libraries but also the blend of specific capabilities that underlie organisational resilience for a public university library reflect key research gaps of interest in this study. Coutu (2002:46) is apt that "resilience is one of the great puzzles of human nature" and how it works in [a university], particularly for libraries, is also a bit of a puzzle".

3.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of this exploratory study was to investigate the nature of capabilities of organisational resilience exhibited by Mzuni following the loss of the university library - as perceived by academics who were Heads of Departments (HoDs) when the incident unfolded. The key research question dwelled on: (1) what is the nature of the capabilities reflecting organisational resilience displayed by Mzuni following the loss of the university library, which occurred in 2015 according to HoDs?

This qualitative study is valuable as it brings to the fore the micro-level interactions and processes within and between internal and external resources to reveal how relational-based capabilities are predominant in the resilience for a library in a public university. Consequently, a framework of organisational resilience that is integrative and insightful to strategic leaders, librarians and HR practitioners is proposed, illustrating the necessity of proactive, composite and systemic nature of resilience for the university library as and when an adversity occurs.

The article starts by focusing on the overview and fundamental aspects of organisational resilience. This is followed by a discussion of the ontology of organisational resilience adopted in this study. Subsequently, it presents the research methodology, findings, and discussion. A framework of proactive organisational resilience for a library in a public university is proposed before conclusion.

4.0 OVERVIEW OF ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE

The concept of resilience is increasingly popular across many disciplines such as health, medicine, information management, disaster management and economics (Houlihan and Young, 2018). However, the complex phenomenon of organisational

resilience is still in its infancy and nebulous not only in the discipline of LIS but also management.

The root of organisational resilience is traceable to the Latin word *resiliere* - which means the material characteristic of bouncing back after a setback (Giustiniano et al., 2018:3). The three main perspectives of organisational resilience decipherable in literature hinge on (1) impact resistance and recovery, (2) adaptation and (3) anticipation (Connelly, Allen, Hatfield, Palma-Oliveira., Woods and Linkov, 2017; Lengnick-Hall., Beck and Lengnick-Hall, 2018; Van der Merwe, Biggs, and Preiser, 2018).

First, impact resistance and recovery emphasizes a rebound or defensive-orientation of resilience, pronouncing coping strategies, quick ability to resume expected performance levels within a given period after the adversity, and learning to bounce back (Van der Merwe et al., 2018). Thus, resilience is an "organization`s ability to resist adverse situations and or the ability to recover after disturbance and return to a normal state" (Duchek, 2019:3).

Second, adaptation-oriented perspectives uphold organisational resilience as response to unexpected events by making adjustments or changes to come out of the crisis stronger than before. Learning, growth, and transformation from an adversity or emerging even stronger than before are the key expectations (Lucy and Shepherd, 2018). For instance, Lengnick-Hall et al., (2011:244) define organisational resilience "as a firm`s ability to effectively absorb, develop situation-specific responses to, and ultimately engage in transformative activities to capitalize on disruptive surprises that potentially threaten organisational survival".

Third, the proactive approach to organisational resilience incorporate the aspect of anticipation (e.g. prediction and prevention of potential danger before damage is done). The National Academy of Sciences acknowledges preparatory capabilities to assert that resilience is "the intrinsic ability [of a system] to prepare and plan for, absorb, recover from, and more successfully adapt to adverse events" (Connelly et al., 2017:48). It is one thing to recognize, after the fact, how resilient an organisation is while it is quite another to understand what the process requires prospectively.

3.0 FOUR FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS OF ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE

One of the four fundamental aspects of organisational resilience relate to whether resilience is an outcome or process. Outcome-focused views of organisational resilience focus on factors that have had positive or negative impact on an organisation performance during an adversity to distinguish resilient from less resilient organisations (Purvis, Spall, Maim and Spiegler, 2016). Alternatively, organisational resilience as a dynamic and on-going developmental process does not have a finishing line. Ducheck (2019) assert that there are three stages in the process of organisational resilience, namely anticipation (e.g. require proactive action), coping (e.g. require concurrent actions to develop and implement solutions), and adaptation (e.g. require reactive action of reflection, and learning to create change). In a different vein, detection and activation, resilient response and organisational learning are three process stages proposed by Burnard and Bharma (2011). It is prudent to question why the process of organisational resilience is portrayed in orderly, progressive, and not in non-progressive, iterative stages as well. The dichotomy of outcome or process is simplistic as it is possible to understand organisational resilience in terms of both process and outcome.

The second fundamental aspect of organisational resilience distinguishes general from specified resilience. Specified resilience entails the decomposition of the system and its environment to determine "what" internal parts should be resilient and against "what" external aspects of the environment this resilience is specifically required (Van der Merwe et al., 2018). Conversely, general resilience refers to the capacity of a system to withstand all hazards, including novel and unforeseen ones, while continuing to provide critical functions (Van der Merwe et al., 2018). Balancing across specified and general resilience is necessary as effort channelled into developing only one kind of resilience may reduce the other kind in an organisation as a system (Van der Merwe et al., 2018).

The multi-level nature of organisational resilience is a third fundamental aspect of organisational resilience. For example, psychological resilience explores "positive adaptability in anticipation of, or in response to, shocks" not only at the level of an individual, team, but also community (Manfield, 2016:35). Teams have the capacity for positive adaptation through collective interactions, rather than as isolated

individuals. Research is lacking on the effect of organisational-level inputs on team resilience. This raises questions of how resilience at one level (e.g. strategic, operational) interacts with another to manifest resilience as an outcome or facilitate the process of being a resilient library.

Lastly, the notion that organisational resilience is multidimensional is fundamental to understand the conceptual complexity (Giustiniano et al., 2018). From a system viewpoint, Tierney and Bruneau (2007) identified four dimensions (4R framework) which include robustness, redundancy, resourcefulness, and rapidity to evaluate system performance. Lengnick-Hall et al (2011) draws from human resources to identify three dimensions of organisational resilience that include cognitive resilience (e.g. mindfulness, sense making, and critical reflection), behaviour resilience (e.g., improvisation, experimentation, learning more about the situation, and abilities to collaborate) and contextual resilience (e.g. settings to integrate cognitive and behaviour resilience). This study adopts a multi-dimensional view of resilience management process, which hinge on the building of situational awareness, managing key vulnerabilities, and increasing adaptive capacity as suitable to explore what happens before but also during and after an adversity. The next section seeks to delve into the ontology of organisational resilience used in this particular study.

5.0   ONTOLOGY OF ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE

McManus et al., (2007:1) assert that organisational resilience is a process involving three types of interrelated tasks or capabilities before and after a disruptive event in an organisation (Giustiniano, et al., 2018:3). Aptly, McManus et al., (2007:1) surmises that:

> *"resilience is a function of an organization's, situation awareness,*
> *management of keystone vulnerabilities and adaptive capacity in*
> *a complex, dynamic and interconnected environment."*

Three aspects of the above view of organisational resilience deserve further conceptual clarity:

5.1 Building situational awareness

First, situation awareness arises from the organization`s understanding but also perception of its entire operating environment (McManus et al., 2007:1). For instance, anticipatory capability is key to identify crises, trigger factors and consequences in the current and expected future of a university. An increased awareness of resources at the disposal of the organisation both internally and externally is also part of building situational awareness (McManus et al., 2007:1). Awareness of the expectations of stakeholders, limitations, obligations and the minimum operating requirements are vital in shaping a clear and coherent response but also delineating recovery priorities in various types of crises. McManus et al., (2007:1) advises that there are four indicators to assess situational awareness. These are (1) clarity of roles and responsibilities (e.g. role definitions, expectations, knowledge, scope); (2) degree of understanding hazards, potential consequences, and impact; (3) awareness of how to manage hazards and (4) knowledge of insurance and other support mechanisms available.

5.2 Managing key stakeholders

Second, the task of managing keystone vulnerabilities is about identifying, prioritizing and targeting "components of an organisational system which have the potential to cause the greatest negative impact either catastrophically or insidiously" (McManus et al., 2007:24). Reducing exposure to risk, enhancing capacity to respond, but also preparedness to reduce consequences of failure are ways of managing key vulnerabilities (McManus et al., 2007:20). Fundamental to managing keystone vulnerabilities are the planning strategies (e.g. on-going risks identification, emergency and recovery planning) and employee participation in emergency exercises. The capability and capacity of internal resources (e.g. physical components, human resources, process resources) as well as external resources (e.g. expected availability of external assistance, services, supply network) are critical in the way key vulnerabilities are managed which unlock the resilience potential of an organisation (McManus et al., 2007:20).

5.3 Increasing adaptive capacity

Lastly, organisational resilience involves adaptive capacity which include "elements that make up the culture of an organisation, which allow it to make decisions in both

a timely and appropriate manner in a crisis and also identify and maximize opportunities" (McManus et al., 2007:2). Achieving resilience depends on adaptation, which include learning, and organisational change or positive adjustment .Dalzell and McManus (2004 cited in Bhamra et al., 2011) are explicit that

> "*adaptive capacity reflects the ability of the system to respond to changes in its external environment and to recover from damage to internal structures within the system that affect the ability to achieve its purpose.*

There are four indicators of adaptive capacity (McManus et al (2011). The first indicator is the extent to which an organization experience the negative effects and occurrence of mitigation strategies of silo mentality. The second indicator is the effectiveness of communication pathways and relationships with all stakeholders in day-to-day situations and crises (McManus et al., 2007:2). The third indicator focuses on the degree of information and knowledge acquired, retained, and transferred throughout the organization and between linked organizations.

Lastly leadership visibility, availability, and transparency in decision-making is key to achieve change or continued adjustments to resources, activities and actors as another indicator of adaptive capacity (McManus et al., 2007:2). Figure 1 below depicts the three interrelated tasks, which may occur concurrently or iteratively in shaping a "situated response to and recovery" from a crisis.
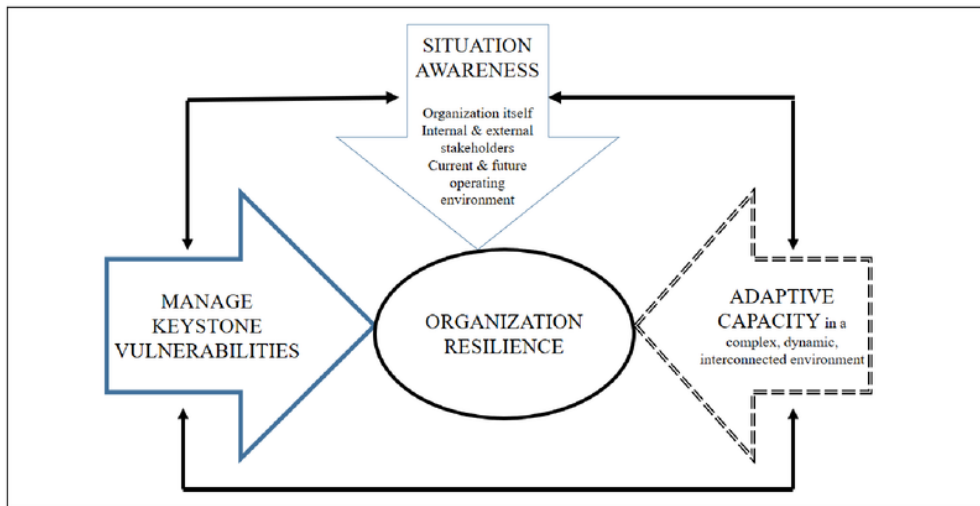
Figure 1: The three functions of organization resilience

Adapted from McManus et al., (2007:1)

Having unravelled the concept of organisational resilience used in this particular study, it is timely to turn into research methodology.

6.0   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section describes how participants in this exploratory study were selected, and data collected and analysed.

6.1   Paradigm

This retrospective study adopted a social constructivist paradigm to gain an in-depth understanding of multiple and subjective meaning of the nature of capabilities of organisational resilience displayed by Mzuni following the loss of a university library in 2015- from the viewpoint of HoDs.

6.2   Sampling

Stratified, purposive sampling was used to select eight HoDs at Mzuni. Selection of participants was based on three criteria: (1) actual experience of the loss of the library in 2015; and (2) evidence of teaching at Mzuni from a year before and three years after the loss of the library in 2015 to reflect and elaborate on the unfolding of different events and activities until the date of the interview. Lastly only those who

were (3) HoDs from 2014-2018 participated in this study. Participants reflected on temporal changes and pattern of micro-level interactions, processes and outcomes, which unfolded over four years as Mzuni tried to recover from the loss of the library. While HoDs are leaders of peers are at the coalface of where teaching and learning occurs within a university, they are also close to students and support staff. This makes them well suited to elaborate on what actually was done at Mzuni, which depict the nature of organisational resilience for the library and the university. Participants were aged 35 to 50 years and had an average of 10 years of work experience with Mzuni.

6.3   Data collection

Eight in-depth, face-to-face and semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded with HoDs. An interview guide drew from the notion of organisational resilience as involving three tasks- building situation awareness, managing key vulnerabilities and adaptive capacity. To reflect on situational awareness, participant focused on (1) roles and responsibilities during the response, recovery and adaptation following the fire, (2) awareness of the range of hazard types and their consequences (positive/negative) within the library and university and (3) awareness of network inter-dependencies within the university and its community of internal and external stakeholder. Additionally, the (4) minimum operating requirements, expectations of stakeholders, response and recovery priorities and (5) awareness of obligations and limitations in relations to disruptions that the university may have or any government aid. To elaborate on aspects of managing keystone vulnerabilities, participants reflected on (1) the extent of risk and emergency planning; (2) employee and stakeholder participation in exercises for emergency management and recovery, and (3) capability and capacity of internal resources. The interview guide also helped participants to reflect on (4) expectations of the organization for the availability and effectiveness of external resources to assist in a crisis but also the (5) university`s connectivity with other critical organizations to ensure the availability of expertise and resources in the event of a crisis.

To uncover aspects of adaptive capacity, participants delved on (1) the extent of silo mentality, (2) effectiveness of communication pathways, and (3) effectiveness of internal and external relationships. The guide also helped participants to reflect on

how (4) vision was a critical crisis response tool; (5) the extent of acquiring, retaining and transferring of knowledge and information throughout the organization and (6) the extent to which leadership and management encouraged flexibility and creativity.

6.4   Data analysis

Interview data were transcribed and member checked before analysis. Open coding and constant comparison were used to deduce key categories and themes from data. Using content analysis, the key categories were grouped into dominant themes reflecting how Mzuni responded and recovered from loss of the library. The details of the research process and direct quotes from participants in this study are given to provide an audit trail, and to enhance dependability and credibility.

7.0   RESULTS

Overall, results reveal that the nature of resilience – quick restoration of library services with little disturbance to the academic calendar - exhibited by Mzuni lacked a proactive approach with capabilities in the anticipation stage of organisational resilience. Predominantly, Mzuni reacted by improvising library services using unexpected and external relational-based capabilities, bounced forward in very limited ways through new digital skills of library staff, academics and students, recent books, and improved electronic sources. Below are details of these findings.

7.1 Haphazard response within a rigid structure

Five of the HoDs concurred that the response was haphazard, typified by lack of anticipation capabilities to recognize the range of potential risks and impacts of current and emerging hazards, and address them proactively. Role ambiguity, lack of clear emergency planning and nimble decision-making processes in a non-routine condition compelled organisational members (e.g. staff, frontline employees) to stick too closely to the knitting as reported below.

> Students who noticed a small fire in the library at 2 or 3 am reported at the potters lodge. I got an SMS...then pictures through WhatsApp of the burning library. Some students and staff tried to get the keys but were told by security that...you will not get the keys to go in until the registrar comes... The city assembly fighters came but late. They were unable to put out the fire (HoD6).

To illustrate the haphazard and uncoordinated nature of the response, one of the interviewees focused on the looting of property.

> *My office was adjacent to the library before moving to the new offices. People had to break doors to rescue their properties. People looted some of the good office computers…. projectors. Some of our friends lost money…laptops and degree certificates. I no longer leave things in the office, no matter what (HoD3).*

7.2 Lack of emergency planning and organisational socialization for adversity

All the eight HoDs attested that Mzuni lacked emergency planning but also emergency exercises as part of a proactive approach to prepare and socialize employees and students for adversity. One of the interviewees elaborated this as follows.

> *As HOD, I do not hear of any emergency plans or planning on what to do when fire occurs… in the library or anywhere on campus. If you now take a student to a library and ask how he or she can sound a fire alarm…The student will not tell you. We have never had mock fire drills (HoD1).*

The culture of not tracking and addressing risks, engaging in scenario thinking and insurance was evident at the library and university levels as follows.

> *I was a student here. The problem of poor electrical wiring in the library has been there for long. The registrar`s office ignore reports on risks; wait until something happens to finally react. Having scenario ABCD…is not our culture here. I even doubt if we had a sensible insurance cover for the library (HoD6).*

7.3 Emergent and systemic sense making of coping capabilities and recovery priorities

Seven HoDs agreed that Mzuni manifested a quick grasp of the variety of emerging fears, dilemmas and limitations of both internal and external stakeholders. One of the interviewees sensed the inadequacy of coping capabilities of academics to sustain

their teaching and assessment techniques but also their fears of reputational damage.

> *We were afraid of starting a semester with course outlines whose prescribed books we did not have. The question was where are we going to get books? The assignment am giving, where are my students likely to get the resources? I remember somebody asked me how can a university run without having the library? (HoD4).*

A variety of concerns of external stakeholders (e.g. parents and employers of students), but also expectation of government as a key external stakeholder were cardinal to the emergent and holistic sense making at Mzuni.

> *We had pressure…employers were concerned that their staff who are students may not finish in time. Parents were also fearful that we might not open…delay or compromise the academic calendar. Government wanted us to re-open as soon as we could (HoD7).*

As a result of quick, collective and interactive sense making by leaders, Mzuni diagnosed three recovery priorities - quick improvisation of the library, re-stocking of the library, but also access to e-resources by staff and students- and corresponding complexities as reported below.

> *[As a university] we agreed to convert the Assembly hall into a small library. This meant relocating the kitchen out of campus and no venue for big classes to write examination. This forced us to expedite the completion of the auditorium. Tracking books on loan to return to the library and re-stocking the library was another priority. How would students access journals without computers? So that was another priority (HoD5).*

Table 1. Nature of passive organization resilience displayed by Mzuni

Theme on realized resilience	Frequency
Haphazard response within a rigid structure	5
Emergent and systemic sense making of coping capabilities and recovery priorities	7

Lack of emergency planning and organisational socialization for adversity	8
Predominance of unexpected and diverse external resource networks	8
Resourcefulness and extra role behaviors by employees	5
Leveraging on technological capabilities	8
Leadership sense giving and alignment	4
Building instrumental bridges and bonds for social capital	8

7.4 Predominance of unexpected and diverse external resource networks

All the eight HoDs were vehement that Mzuni restored its library services predominantly based on unexpected, external, diverse and broad resource networks (e.g. new books, technical advice, books, furniture, media coverage) helpful to the university. The diversity of external sources (e.g. local, international, university, publisher, media) and simultaneous focus on immediate and long-term needs was illuminated in this way.

> *The librarian of Malawi college of medicine came to give us a talk on how we can access electronic books and electronic information resources... Chancellor College…. Seventh day Adventist University gave us books. Anglia the publishers, The University of Strathclyde in Scotland gave us books, tables and library shelves from their small library. Another university gave us technical advice. The University of Virginia turkey in America is drawing the designs for our future library. Presentations of donations were open to media and leaders of students. Lecturers made announcement of new books while the librarian used notice boards to tell everyone about new books (HoD3).*

Interestingly, the only expected support was from government and inadequate to restore library services in the absence of any other assistance.

> *Government promised some millions of kwacha for the recovery but only released less than promised. It was not enough to do anything*

tangible. If we had depended on that alone, I do not think things will have progressed and re-opened with a temporary library (HoD1).

7.5 Resourcefulness and extra role behaviours of employees

Five of the HoDs reported that resourcefulness and extra role behaviours by academics were strategic in supporting students and the university to cope with the adversity. Voluntarily, some academics down loaded, printed and copied whatever reading materials were key, reflecting not only resourcefulness, but also improvisation to support their students.

> *If I know that the material is important for students to perform in a particular course or assignment, I would simply download it, print it and share with students. Let us say I have a very important book which my students can also benefit from. I would run copies that I shared with students, and then put some on short loan. I could not do otherwise until when we had key and latest books (HoD8).*

Notably, few academics were altruistic to donate personal books to the library while others took up voluntary roles to champion fundraising.

> *My family and I gave the university books, which were relevant and could be used in basic sciences, education and medical courses. In addition, I chaired the Mzuzu University Library fundraising dinner. Most employees expected government to give us money. This is why there was little support for the dinner from Mzuni members (HoD2).*

7.6 Leveraging on technological capabilities

All the eight HoDs concurred that the library leveraged technology by using ICT proficiency of staff from the library and technology to ensure continued access to e-resources by academics in the absence of library services as reflected below.

> *These days librarianship is going digital. We prescribed to some good online databases. We talk of INALI, ISEIGE, INELOD and more. So lecturers were able to access e-resources using computers and internet connectivity in their offices However, this was not the case for students (HoD6).*

Digital skills acquired by academics and students coupled with active and improved e-resources and services by the periodical section reveal the limited ways of how Mzuni bounced forward from the adversity.

> *When students returned in March, dedicated library staff gave them sessions on how to get e-resources. Students and academics got digital skills to search and get latest e-resources. We never had periodical section that was very serious as it is today. Our periodical section is reliable on e-resources and recent journals. Another positive change is the fire extinguishers…sprinklers everywhere; it is really a good try. (HoD8).*

7.7 Leadership sense giving and alignment

Four HoDs agreed that a series of internal brainstorming meetings were fruitful as a mechanism for university leaders to embrace diverse views, make sense of the shared urgency and give direction to restore library services amidst a variety of uncertainties.

> *The team of the Vice Chancellor …Deputy Vice Chancellor, University librarian. Most deans….The President and secretary of student union were all on campus even on 25 December, examining different scenarios. Already Mzuni had a deficit… the new dilemma was that the temporary library was not budgeted for. The second semester was not far (HoD3).*

Organisational members learnt to live with discomfort, which reflected collective mindfulness necessary for the improvised library to operate despite its shortfalls.

> *In the old library, you had space to put your bags. There is not such space in the makeshift library with only 250 seats for over 1000 students. Bags are kept outside. If it is raining, we have to rush and get our bags. In the corridors, we encouraged each other (HoD1).*

7.8 Building instrumental bridges and bonds for social capital

All the eight HoDs were cognizant of the politics of sense giving embedded in visits by political leaders, which created bridges for international donor to support Mzuni as exemplified below.

> *The State President came to see and assess the burnt library. The president was concerned… assured us of support from government. And also asked donors to help. Through the visits of political leaders, individuals pledged…different organizations such as UNESCO started to donate books. I also remember that we had a visit by the Minister of Education (HoD6).*

Cross-functional committees bonded diverse employees (e.g. different functions, specialisation, and hierarchy) around specific priorities, unlocking collective creativity, and commitment to pursue both immediate and long-term needs. This is what one of the interviewees had to say

> *The library committee decided that people in the acquisitions lead efforts of liaising with departments to identify the priority books to buy as soon as possible. We got together as one and had all the key books required before re-opening for second semester… Members of the construction committee ensured our temporary library was ready. Last month some members were in the USA to follow-up the design of our future library (HoD4).*

8.0 DISCUSSION

Sutcliffe and Vogus (2003:108) warn us that "good outcomes are not enough to define resilience…". Although the outcome of quick restoration of library services with little disturbance to the academic calendar indicate resilience by Mzuni, there are critical and underlying issues which show the existence of structure, culture and an approach to resilience which cannot cultivate a bedrock for a resilient university and its library.

First, structure at Mzuni (e.g. role ambiguity, rigidity) inhibited organisational members from breaking out of the day-to-day orientation to be flexible, decisive, and creative to exploit resources for a coherent emergency response. Commonly, the

metaphor often used to best describe the structure in the public universities is a mechanistic one – due to their exceptional inflexibility. However, recent studies shows that the organisations that simultaneously pursue both exploitation and exploration, in contrast to focusing on just one, can achieve superior performance in terms of survival in an adversity and long-term success (Giustiniano et al., 2018:3). Leja and Nanguck (2013:161) advises, "the university authorities [as ambidextrous leaders] are expected to play the role of an orchestra conductor", embracing and reconciling paradox thinking if they are to create resilience for the university library. Empowered cross-functional committees with diverse members across the university were useful in the relentless and timely pursuit of short-term but also long-term demand (Denyer, 2017). This illustrates how structure and interdependencies need to facilitate quick and systemic support for the resilience of the library across the university.

Varheim (2016) is cognizant that culture is another contextual factor critical in shaping resilient-oriented values and behaviours of organisational members. Lucy and Shepherd (2018) also concur that resilience emerges from an organisation's culture and learning. The new artefacts (e.g. fire extinguishers, sprinklers) on campus at Mzuni are critical, and reflect awareness of fire risk and organisational learning by Mzuni. However, this level of change is superficial to create a culture of resilience. Organisation socialisation of academics, students, and staff needs to focus on the underlying assumptions rather than artefacts of fire risk awareness, if organisational members are to embed and manifest resilience-enhancing values and behaviours (Schein, 2010:29).

Second, Mzuni lacked a proactive approach to organisational resilience that could have embedded emergency planning and exercises to allow people to practice emergency response regularly before the adversity at Mzuni, key to avoid haphazard response. Concisely, thinking about resilience when there is no catastrophe going on is a hallmark of a resilient university and its library (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2015:1). Anticipation capabilities as part of the first stage of organisational resilience are about "observing internal and external developments to identify and track critical developments and potential threats, and—as far as possible—to prepare by taking actions in the present that promote desirable outcomes and circumvent disruptions in the future" (Ducheck, 2019:3). Although anticipation capabilities may not be very

insightful with black swans, they underscore the fact that the anticipation stage is vital to support coping and adaptation as the other stages of organisation (Lucy and Shepherd, 2018).

Third, the resilience of Mzuni - to improvise library services quickly with minimal disturbance to the academic calendar- is also questionable as this was based predominantly on unexpected and external relational-based capabilities. McManus et al (2011) is explicit that it is the "guaranteed" expectation upheld by an organization that effective external resources will actually be available to assist in a crisis that characterizes a resilient organization. Unfortunately, the only expected support for Mzuni was financial from the government - which was inadequate for restoration of library services. This underscore the need to develop and implement deliberate and externally focused relational strategies for cooperative networks or bridging social capital to access diverse and guaranteed resources realizable as and when adversity to the library occurs.

Furthermore, this study has found that organisational resilience for a university library is a composite capability, which emerge from an interplay of individual, organisational and relational capabilities in anticipation, coping and adaptation to an adversity. Four organisational-level capabilities of resilience that contributed to the passive resilience of Mzuni are decipherable. First, strategic leaders of Mzuni had to set strategic direction amidst uncertainty, urgency and lack of internal resources. Second, implementation of strategic improvisations (e.g. infrastructure modification of the assembly hall into an interim library, relocation of kitchen) was key. Organisations that survive from adversity regard improvisation as a core capability. Urgency and bricolage are the two main drivers of improvisation. A culture that promote urgency and experimentation but also tolerates competent mistakes arising from novel ideas (not flawed execution) provides suitable context to nurture improvisation. Training on improvisation is also key to enhance resilience. Third, the leveraging on technology for digital library and emergency communication (e.g. WhatsApp) was also valuable in sharing timely emergency information and ensuring that academics and students had access to a variety of online resources during the coping stage. Interestingly, the digital skills and fluency acquired by library staff to support academics and students, faculty to pursue research, and students for their

education but also the improved e-resources after the adversity were the only two notable elements of how Mzuni took advantage of the long-term digital trends and the adversity. Lastly, interpersonal communication was also key to promote organisation-wide communication through various vehicles (e.g. committees, media, notices, and in-class announcements). Informal communication was also salient for self-organization (e.g. fundraising committee) – as stakeholders came together voluntarily to help Mzuni to cope from adversity.

This study shows that relational and organisational capabilities also interacted with three individual-level capabilities exhibited by organisational members at Mzuni. Thus, engagement in sense making as individuals (but also as a member of a committee or in corridor conversations) was pivotal to realise pragmatic resilience through improvisation. The development of digital skills for resilient human capital enabled access of academics, students and library staff to access resources from the virtual world. The cognitive and behavioural aspects evident in these findings resonates with Lengneck et al, (2011) who argued that cognitive and behavioural dimensions of organisational members are key in organisational resilience. Lastly, the capability of resourcefulness was critical in an adversity as academics as individuals or group (fundraising committee) exploited resources to address immediate challenges through discretionary behaviours not recognized by the reward system. Borekci, Rofcanin and Gürbüz (2015:6841) concur that "resilience is socially enabled and developed via the interactions and relations between system members; each party to this system is expected to contribute to, and enhance the survival of, the overall system".

9.0 PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR PROACTIVE ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE OF A LIBRARY IN A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

Drawing from the above, it is posit that anticipatory activities and behaviours that are largely proactive, and occur independently from adverse events are the essence of proactive organisational resilience. A proactive approach to resilience requires ambidextrous leadership as a bedrock for emergent and holistic sense making but also sense giving in a supportive context (e.g. emergency planning, culture,

structure) replete with uncertainty (Probst, Raisch and Tushman, 2011). Resilient-building leadership integrate organisational, individual, and relational-based capabilities in a simultaneous pursuit of immediate and long-term issues in an adversity (Teixeira and Werther, 2013:338). Figure 2 present a proposed integrative framework of proactive organisational resilience for a library in a public university which is needed at Mzuni.
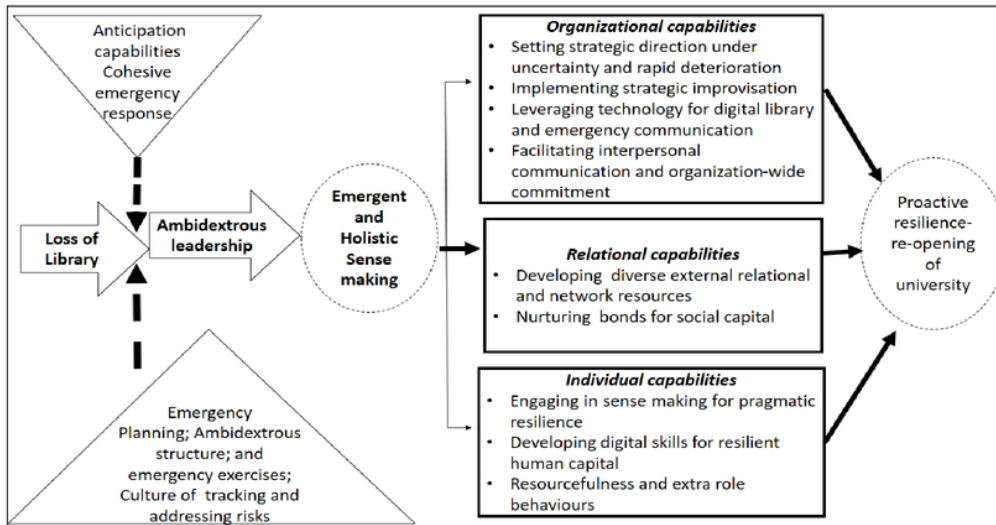

Figure 2: Nature of proactive organisational resilience of a library in a public university

Source: Author

10.0 IMPLICATIONS

Three specific implications of the findings of this study are:

10.1 Ambidextrous structure and culture

Structure and culture that impedes urgency, psychological and managerial empowerment of organisational members, quick decision-making processes and execution at the coalface is not appropriate to cultivate organisational resilience for the university library. Public universities need to create an ambidextrous organisational structure and culture to balance at least four aspects. These are (1) freedom and autonomy with controls of frontline employees; (2) dual capabilities of exploiting current conditions to bounce back in an adversity and exploration of

resources for bouncing forward; (3) strategic agility and bureaucratic practices, (4) and problem-driven innovation for immediate solution and opportunity-driven innovation for the future of a resilient library. Implementing an ambidextrous structure is necessary but not easy for leaders in public universities characterized as not change-ready and more mechanistic.

A culture of being blind to risk is not a bedrock for proactive organisational resilience. This call for cultural change to embed underlying assumptions that reinforce anticipation capabilities, ethos of risk management and organisation-wide commitment to cultivate resilient students, academics, and library services. Creating and maintaining an ambidextrous structure and culture for the university library is not easy but necessary for university and library leaders. It is the university and its library that socialises its organisational members to "get ahead of change to survive and thrive" that is resilient (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2015:2).

10.2 Digital skills for digital library

Digital skills of library staff, academics and students are a salient aspect of the resilience of the university library. Thus, university librarians and HR practitioners are implored to identify and address digital skills gaps of staff within the library so that they can work effectively in the digital world and support students who are predominantly digital natives and digital immigrants among the academics. Digital proficiency of library staff is core to spreading digital fluency in the university and enhance student`s resilience and research (Raju, Schoombee and Raju, 2013). A clear digital strategy for the resilience of the library and its users is necessary in a virtual world of ubiquitous, digitised, and online access to content. This type of strategy should also ensure access to affordable, high-speed internet connectivity and solutions to frequent electricity outage affecting most the university libraries in Africa.

10.3 Building systemic resilience as a set of developable capabilities

Technical capabilities within the library system are cardinal but inadequate on their own to shape resilience for the library nested in a broader university system. This calls for building a proactive and systemic approach across multiple levels in the

university and the library to regularly ensure situational awareness. The role of the university librarian needs to evolve and embrace the challenge of being a relationship builder. The university librarian needs to champion the integration of a set of various individual, organisational and relational-oriented capabilities to effectively balance resilience specific to the library with general resilience necessary for the library.

Building systemic resilience proactively also entails developing effective resilience capabilities across library functions and the three stages of the process of organisational resilience before an adversity actually arises. Without a systemic alignment to integrate capabilities of resilience for the public university with those specific to the library, a resilient library is an illusion.

11.0 CONCLUSION

The nature of resilience – quick restoration of library services with little disturbance to the academic calendar - exhibited by Mzuni is a misleading outcome which hides many critical and underlying issues. The approach to organisational resilience was not proactive, but also ignored the anticipation stage and its capabilities. Anticipation capabilities and good preparation before an adversity occurs are hallmarks of resilience for the university library regardless of the type or magnitude of the adversity.

Public universities need to purposely develop and prioritize relational-based capabilities and digital strategy as the bedrock of resilience to avoid reliance on unexpected external resources. Simultaneous development and integration of a variety of organisational, individual, and relational capabilities is fundamental not simply because organisational resilience is a composite capability, but also to embrace the spectrum of all stages in the entire process of organisational resilience. Furthermore, ambidextrous structure, culture and leadership but also digital strategy are key for a university library to be resilient. This study is a key scholarly step towards clarifying and integrating organisational, individual and relational capabilities necessary to build prospectively the composite capability of organisational resilience before an adversity occurs. Future research is necessary to further refine and validate the components and interactional aspects of the proposed framework of proactive organisational resilience not just according to HoDs of academic

departments, but also library practitioners in diverse public universities to get an emic view.

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proposal