

STRATEGIES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE IN 10 ROMANIAN COMPANIES IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL TRANSFORMATIONS. AN EXPLORATORY STUDY (STAGE I)

Anca Ioana BLAGA (MARTIN)

PhD. Student,
Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania
E-mail: blagaanca23@stud.ase.ro
ORCID: 0009-0000-2054-2122

PhD. Gabriela Iuliana MUNTEANU

Vice Rector,
“Andrei Şaguna” University of Constanţa, Romania
E-mail: gabrielamunteanu@andreisaguna.ro
ORCID: 0009-0001-1852-2160

Alina Andrea MIRON

PhD. Student,
Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania
E-mail: alina.miron@mk.ase.ro
ORCID: 0000-1111-2222-3333

Georgiana Elena CONSTANTIN

PhD. Student,
Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania
E-mail: alina.miron@mk.ase.ro
ORCID: 0009-0004-7425-4254

Abstract: *In a global ecosystem marked by uncertainty – from logistical disruptions and geopolitical tensions to accelerated digital transformations – an organization's resilience can no longer be guaranteed by its financial resources alone. This paper presents the results of the first stage of an exploratory study, part of doctoral research, which investigates organizational resilience strategies in the Romanian business environment. The main objective is to analyze how organizations adapt their crisis management mechanisms and communication processes under the pressure of global uncertainty. The methodology adopted is qualitative, based on semi-structured interviews with general managers, owners, and PR specialists from 10 companies active in various sectors. The research is structured around eight fundamental themes, from defining the concept of crisis to post-event learning processes. Preliminary results highlight a dichotomy between the intuitive agility of local firms and the procedural rigor of multinationals, both converging, however, towards the need for "organizational intelligence" (Iacob & Cismaru, 2019). The findings emphasize that ethics and radical transparency are no longer mere public relations options, but essential strategic capabilities for maintaining legitimacy in the digital age. The paper aligns with the theme of the conference "Sustainability and Economic Resilience in the Context of Global Systemic Transformations," demonstrating that the long-term sustainability of organizations depends on their ability to transform disruptions into stored procedural experience. This initial stage lays the foundation for the subsequent expansion of the sample, providing valuable insight into how economic resilience is built through strategic communication and ethical responsibility in emerging economies.*

Keywords: *organizational resilience, crisis management, strategic communication, organizational intelligence, sustainability, reputation management.*

Classification JEL: M14, M10, L20.

UDC: 005.21:334.72:339.9(498)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53486/ser2026.29>

1. Introduction

In the contemporary business landscape, marked by an emerging "polycrisis" and unprecedented global systemic transformations, organizational resilience has ceased to be a mere competitive advantage, becoming a sine qua non condition for survival (European Commission, 2025). In this context, the way organizations process information and negotiate trust with stakeholders determines not only their ability to overcome the impasse but also their capacity for institutional learning.

The evolution of organizational resilience requires a shift from isolated defensive measures toward an integrated approach rooted in systems thinking. According to Manzini et al. (2025), resilience is not a static trait, but an emergent property of the entire organizational system, enabling managers to navigate the complex interdependencies between internal operations and volatile external environments. This systemic perspective provides the essential structural foundation for the transparent, two-way dialogue advocated by Kwiliński et al. (2025), effectively transforming communication from a mere support function into a vital feedback mechanism. Consequently, the organization functions as a coherent whole, capable of sustaining the strategic crisis navigation process described by Mafimisebi et al. (2025).

This article presents the results of the first stage of a broader exploratory study aimed at identifying the mechanisms through which companies in Romania adapt to these external pressures. This research aims to analyze how organizational leaders decode and manage these complex dynamics, emphasizing the vital role of communication in maintaining internal cohesion and external legitimacy.

To achieve this goal, our approach investigates eight fundamental pillars, which also constitute the specific objectives of the research. This research proposes a holistic approach to the phenomenon of crisis, starting with its conceptual definition in various industries in order to decode the meanings attributed to it in a context of instability. The central objectives aim to dissect crisis management mechanisms through the lens of decision-making agility and leadership, while also exploring external and internal communication strategies, with a particular focus on managing uncertainty at the organizational culture level. The study also assesses the strategic role of communication professionals in informing management decisions, while investigating ethical dimensions based on honesty and responsibility. Finally, the research aims to prioritize dialogue with the media and stakeholders, analyzing how the crisis experience is converted through learning and evaluation into sustainable prevention strategies for the future. Given the exploratory nature of the first stage of the research, the study does not start from pre-established hypotheses, but uses research questions derived from the eight themes of the interview guide.

By addressing these issues, the study seeks to provide a nuanced perspective on resilience in the Romanian context, highlighting how transparency and procedural rigor can transform vulnerability into an opportunity for strategic maturation. This first stage lays the foundation for a deep understanding of how organizations build their reputational "shield" (Coombs, 2007) in a world where the only constant is change. By bridging these theoretical frameworks with the lived experiences of Romanian SMEs, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how decentralized, dialogue-based structures can outperform centralized hierarchies in times of global instability.

2. Literature Review

The evolution of crisis management has marked a fundamental transition from a purely reactive perspective, focused on limiting immediate damage, to a proactive model based on strategic resilience and systemic adaptation. At the heart of this new narrative lies the concept of "organizational intelligence," defined by Iacob and Cismaru (2019) as the collective ability to process signals from the environment and transform the raw experience of crisis into strategic knowledge stored in the firm's procedural memory. This ability becomes critical in the context of contemporary "polycrises," where systemic shocks force organizations to reassess their structural stability and institutional learning capacity under the pressure of global uncertainty (Iacob & Cismaru, 2019; Kwiliński et al., 2025).

In substantiating modern resilience, Manzini et al. (2025) propose a shift from reactive strategies to a paradigm based on systems thinking. The authors argue that resilience should not be treated as an isolated variable, but as an emergent property resulting from the harmonious interaction of all organizational components.

Organizations that successfully navigate systemic shocks are not necessarily those with the most extensive financial resources, but those that cultivate and maintain a transparent, two-way dialogue with the entire stakeholder ecosystem, from employees and investors to customers and authorities (Kwiliński et al., 2025). According to the same vision, radical transparency transforms stakeholders from passive observers into partners in resilience, ensuring systemic stability that financial resources alone cannot guarantee (Kwiliński et al., 2025).

If resilience is conditioned by the quality of dialogue with stakeholders (Kwiliński et al., 2025), effective success in managing unpredictable situations lies in the ability of leaders to become true 'masters of uncertainty'. According to the qualitative study conducted by Mafimisebi et al. (2025), organizations with high strategic resilience do not try to eliminate uncertainty through rigid planning, but learn to navigate it through flexibility and contextual decisions. A central pillar of recent literature emphasizes the importance of two-way, transparent communication with stakeholders as an essential mechanism for managing uncertainty. Another important pillar of the literature is the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), which emphasizes that reputation is a volatile asset that depends on the degree of assumed responsibility (Coombs and Holladay, 2012).

However, recent digital transformations have introduced the concept of "paracrisis," where seemingly minor incidents on social media can quickly escalate into a major image crisis. Kwiliński et al. (2025) argue that organizations that manage to maintain this dialogue not only survive external shocks but also strengthen their long-term resilience by cultivating trust as a strategic asset. In the digital age, this reputation becomes a "verifiable strategic asset," where any discrepancy between stated ethical values and concrete actions is immediately sanctioned by the public, requiring constant monitoring of "paracrisis" phenomena (Cismaru, 2022; Coombs & Holladay, 2012).

The literature highlights the role of leaders in balancing the paradoxical tensions of internal communication, using empathetic and symmetrical leadership models to ensure credibility among employees (Heide & Simonsson, 2015; Men, 2015; Sharples et al., 2023). While multinational organizations rely on procedural rigor and compliance systems, firms in emerging economies tend to resort to agility and personalized leadership, reflecting the need

to constantly adapt to disruptions in vital flows (Boin et al., 2005; Grunnan & Fridheim, 2017; Iacob & Cismaru, 2019).

Heide and Simonsson (2014) argue that effective internal communication management acts as a shield against disruptions, while empathetic and symmetrical leadership stimulates workforce engagement in times of tension. Success in managing contemporary crises depends on the organization's ability to maintain a two-way dialogue with stakeholders and to practice active "organizational listening" (Macnamara, 2022) in order to integrate their concerns into the strategic response.

Ultimately, sustainability and economic resilience depend on the capacity for "organizational listening" and integrating lessons learned (Macnamara, 2022; Cioacă and Briciu, 2017; Kwiliński et al., 2025). Transforming a traumatic experience into an opportunity for growth depends on shifting from "buffering" strategies to "bridging" strategies in relation to the external environment (Cioacă & Briciu, 2017; Kim & Krishna, 2017).

Thus, radical transparency becomes an essential strategic capability in an environment marked by global systemic transformations, and organizational resilience is a dynamic learning process that allows vulnerabilities to be transformed into sustainable strategic expertise (Cioacă & Briciu, 2017; Iacob & Cismaru, 2019; Kwiliński et al., 2025).

3. Methodology

This research adopts an exploratory qualitative approach, representing the initial stage of a broader scientific endeavor integrated into the doctoral thesis entitled "Crisis Management in Public Relations." The choice of qualitative methodology is justified by the need to decipher the subjective nuances and complex decision-making mechanisms that organizational leaders activate under pressure. The purpose of this first stage is to identify behavioral patterns and resilience strategies in a diverse sample, providing the contextual depth necessary to substantiate future working hypotheses of the research.

The main tool for data collection was the semi-structured interview, a method that offers the optimal balance between thematic rigor and the flexibility needed to explore new perspectives offered by respondents. The sample for this stage included 10 companies operating on the Romanian market in various sectors (real estate, logistics, industrial production, retail, shipping, and healthcare services). The interviews were conducted with employees in strategic positions, such as general managers, business owners, PR and marketing managers, thus ensuring an overview of both the operational and reputational dimensions of crisis management.

The interview guide was designed to reflect the strategic objectives of the research, structured around eight fundamental themes that cover the chronology and complexity of a crisis. It begins with a conceptual definition of crisis to capture leaders' perceptions of current risks, continuing with an analysis of crisis management through the lens of decision-making processes and response structures. The communication dimension is explored multidimensionally, targeting both external communication strategies and the construction of messages to the public, as well as internal communication, focused on maintaining team morale and cohesion. Strategically, the tool assesses the role of communication professionals in informing decisions, while also investigating ethical dimensions through the lens of honesty and social responsibility. The end of the interview

prioritizes media and stakeholder relations to identify the hierarchy of dialogue with stakeholders, culminating in learning and evaluation processes, which are essential for integrating the crisis experience into organizational memory.

This preliminary stage serves as the foundation for the second phase of qualitative research, which will expand the sample to 20 companies to include additional sectors and saturate the collected data. Subsequently, the results extracted from these in-depth interviews will be used to develop quantitative research tools. This methodological trajectory ensures a coherent transition from the phenomenological understanding of crises to measuring their magnitude in the Romanian business environment.

This research adopts a sequential exploratory design, in which the qualitative data extracted from the 20 in-depth interviews serve to substantiate and refine the quantitative instrument (the questionnaire). Correlating the two stages allows for the triangulation of the managerial perspective with that of the workforce, providing a holistic view of resilience.

The qualitative results provide the 'depth' of the Romanian context, while the quantitative stage involving 200 respondents will provide us with the 'breadth' necessary to statistically validate the hypotheses regarding the relationship between organizational intelligence (Iacob & Cismaru, 2019) and reputational sustainability (Cismaru, 2022).

The selection of study participants was guided by a set of rigorous criteria designed to ensure a good representation of the investigated phenomenon. Firstly, emphasis was placed on professional expertise and hierarchical position, with only senior management leaders (CEOs, Managing Directors) or communication and compliance department coordinators being recruited, thus ensuring access to the organization's strategic vision and decision-making mechanisms. Secondly, validation through sectoral diversity was sought, with the sample including representatives from distinct industries – from heavy industry and manufacturing to real estate, services, and retail – which allowed for a comparative analysis of the perception of logistical versus reputational risks.

This heterogeneity was complemented by capital typology, including both local entrepreneurial firms and branches of multinational organizations, facilitating the identification of the dichotomy between local agility and international procedural rigor. By applying these filters, the aim was to reach a theoretical saturation point, where the information obtained would provide a deep understanding of systemic adaptation mechanisms, beyond simple statistical generalizations.

Data collection and processing

The field research was conducted between March and October 2025, during which time the ten semi-structured interviews were conducted. To ensure data accuracy and compliance with ethical standards, all interactions were audio recorded with the prior consent of the participants and subsequently transcribed in full (verbatim).

With regard to information processing, a qualitative content analysis was performed manually, without the use of CAQDAS software (e.g., NVivo or ATLAS.ti). This methodological decision was based on the desire to maintain maximum proximity to the source text and to capture the subtle nuances, pragmatic inflections, and specific context of each respondent, elements that can sometimes be diluted by automated coding.

The data interpretation process followed an iterative procedure, structured in three distinct stages, designed to ensure the depth and validity of the analysis. In the first phase, immersion in the data was achieved through repeated and in-depth reading of the transcripts, facilitating familiarization with the nuances of each respondent's discourse and identifying the dominant tone of the interviews. Subsequently, thematic coding was performed, a stage in which units of meaning were isolated and grouped into relevant categories such as organic resilience, communicational transparency, and internal dynamics. Finally, the synthesis and validation stage involved corroborating these emerging categories with the existing theoretical framework (Manzini et al., 2025; Kwiliński et al., 2025), allowing the raw data to be transposed into the structured conclusions presented in the results section.

4. Results and Discussion

A comparative analysis of the ten case studies reveals a transformation in the way Romanian organizations process the contemporary "polycrisis" (European Commission, 2025). The results indicate that "organizational intelligence" - defined by Iacob and Cismaru (2019) as the ability to integrate environmental feedback into decision-making structures - is the foundation of systemic resilience. This ability to adapt is being tested by major external factors, such as the need for citizens to secure supplies in case of instability (AP News, 2025), a phenomenon that reflects the state of global uncertainty.

In terms of crisis taxonomy and risk perception, the research results reveal that respondents do not define the phenomenon as an isolated event, but rather as a fundamental disruption of vital organizational flows. This perception varies significantly depending on the specific sector: in heavy and manufacturing industries (R3, R7, R8, R9), the crisis is dictated by supply chain volatility and logistical pressures, while for consumer-oriented sectors (R4, R5, R6, R10), the main vulnerability is reputational and digital in nature. At the same time, there is a keen awareness of the concept of "paracrisis," where seemingly minor incidents can quickly escalate online, requiring constant monitoring to prevent them from turning into major image crises. This nuance of risk confirms the need for careful monitoring of the digital environment to ensure reputational stability in the context of current global transformations.

The analysis of management processes highlights a marked distinction between the agility specific to the "one-man band" in small companies and the systemic rigor that defines multinationals. While local leaders frequently resort to "strategic improvisation" to overcome immediate operational bottlenecks, international organizations, such as those identified in case studies R3 and R5, base their responses on detailed crisis manuals and rigorous simulations.

Resilience as a function of relational capital

Empirical analysis of the 10 interviews reveals that SME managers often intuitively adopt the systemic thinking model theorized by Manzini et al. (2025). Unlike rigid corporate structures (such as R5), where responsibilities are fragmented, local business leaders (e.g., R1, R9, R10) demonstrate a deep understanding of how a disruption at one point in the system - whether in the supply chain or a legislative change-reverberates throughout the entire stakeholder ecosystem. For example, in the case of R9, resilience was the result of a holistic vision that linked strategic raw material procurement with proactive customer education and transparency toward authorities. This ability to process the organization as an

interconnected system allowed the subjects to identify vulnerabilities before they escalated into critical crises, confirming Manzini's thesis that systemic thinking is the foundation of sustainability in conditions of systemic instability.

This research confirms the validity of the model proposed by Kwiliński et al. (2025), according to which organizational survival in the face of systemic shocks goes beyond the sphere of financial resources and is intrinsically linked to the quality of dialogue with stakeholders. During the interviews, it was observed that Romanian SMEs (R1, R6, R7) often compensate for the lack of massive capital reserves with extremely high "communicational agility." This form of relational resilience manifests itself through direct and honest channels, which allow workflows to be adapted in real time, validating the hypothesis that transparency functions as a strategic asset that reduces uncertainty.

Navigating uncertainty through agile decision-making and "strategic improvisation"

The results of the analysis highlight that the Romanian SMEs in the sample do not approach crises as events that need to be "solved" using predefined recipes, but as continuous flows that require adaptive navigation, confirming the "Master of Uncertainty" profile proposed by Mafimisebi et al. (2025). In the interviews analyzed (especially R1, R2, and R6), strategic resilience was operationalized through a remarkable ability to make decisions in the absence of complete data, relying on managerial intuition and rapid adjustment of operational processes. This "strategic improvisation" – observed, for example, in the recalibration of assemblies at R6 or in securing stocks at R1 – demonstrates that success in the face of systemic disruptions does not belong to organizations that try to eliminate uncertainty, but to those that learn to use it as a catalyst for tactical innovation and resource optimization.

In the real estate sector (R10), the manager did not limit himself to complying with the rules, but adopted a posture of lifelong learning ("we learn throughout our lives"), reflecting precisely the adaptability needed to transform a hostile context (lack of parking infrastructure) into a competitive advantage through transparency, confirming the the profile of the "navigator in uncertainty" described by Mafimisebi et al. (2025).

Operationalizing two-way dialogue in the entrepreneurial environment

In contrast to the procedural rigidity of multinationals, the local firms analyzed use two-way dialogue as a mechanism for preventing "crises." Respondents from technical sectors (R9 - stone and marble, R10 - real estate) emphasize the importance of prior customer consultation and constant verification of their expectations. This approach transforms communication from a PR function into an essential component of quality control. Thus, by maintaining a constant connection with the "stakeholder ecosystem" (suppliers, installers, end customers), these organizations manage to prevent execution errors that could trigger major reputational crises, perfectly illustrating Kwiliński's thesis on dialogue as a factor for survival.

Internal dimension: Employees as pillars of systemic resilience

The analysis of the results highlights that, regardless of the organizational profile, internal communication was identified as a critical factor of resilience in times of instability. In companies with domestic capital, such as those identified in case studies R1 and R6, there is a preference for a "family" type of interaction model, where team cohesion is based on empathy and the direct credibility of the leader. In contrast, multinational organizations opt for the implementation of hierarchical and clearly structured information flows.

In this complex ecosystem, the communication specialist becomes a true strategic "sensor," with the critical role of decoding external pressures and translating them into coherent internal messages. This function is essential for balancing the paradoxical tensions that inevitably arise during a crisis, thus ensuring the stability and alignment of the organization through "organizational listening" processes. Through these mechanisms, professionals in the field contribute directly to strengthening organizational intelligence.

Employee loyalty and internal dialogue

The research highlights that systemic resilience starts from within the organization, by maintaining an open channel with employees, who are seen by respondents as the 'first sensors' of the crisis. In line with the model proposed by Kwiliński et al. (2025), SME managers (R1, R8) reported that their priority during systemic shocks (e.g., the pandemic) was to maintain the workforce, even at the cost of immediate financial losses. This honest dialogue about the state of the company generated a capital of trust that allowed organizations to resume operations quickly.

A significant finding of the study concerns how dialogue with employees becomes a protective shield for the entire organization. In line with the vision of Kwiliński et al. (2025), SME managers (R1, R8) report that maintaining internal transparency during periods of disruption (e.g., pandemic or rampant inflation) took priority over immediate profitability. The deliberate choice to retain the workforce and communicate honestly about the company's prospects created a capital of loyalty that ensured a rapid post-crisis recovery. In contrast, the multinational analyzed (R5) tends to depersonalize this dialogue through global protocols, which, while providing stability, can make the organization vulnerable by losing the "human sensors" that are the first to detect signs of an impending crisis.

Transparency as a shock absorption mechanism

The results of the qualitative analysis confirm the thesis put forward by Kwiliński et al. (2025) regarding the primacy of dialogue over financial resources. In the case of SME subjects (e.g., R1, R6, R7), resilience was activated through what respondents call "radical sincerity" in their relationships with business partners. For example, in the interior design sector (R6), immediate recognition of installation errors and transparent communication of solutions transformed potential image crises into opportunities to strengthen customer loyalty. This behavior demonstrates that, for small and medium-sized companies, two-way dialogue acts as a more effective risk buffer than rigid corporate procedures.

The ethical dimension of communication has undergone significant evolution, moving beyond the stage of a simple moral imperative to become a verifiable strategic asset in the digital economy. In this sense, the organizational leaders analyzed, especially those in the industrial and real estate sectors, adopt a strategy of "radical transparency" as a central pillar in maintaining relationships with stakeholders. This approach involves honestly acknowledging technical or operational limitations rather than maintaining a defensive silence, with managers preferring immediate vulnerability to long-term reputational risks.

Reflective learning and transforming vulnerability into expertise

A critical dimension of the study, which resonates with the vision of Mafimisebi et al. (2025), is the transformation of crisis from a threat into a process of profound organizational learning. Respondent R10 (real estate developer) summarizes this stance by stating that "we learn throughout our lives," indicating that strategic resilience is fueled by intellectual

curiosity and openness to new terminology and working methods. This "mastery" in managing the unpredictable manifests itself through the internalization of lessons learned from infrastructure or communication crises and their transformation into higher technical standards (e.g., exceeding parking regulations).

A key finding of the study confirms the thesis put forward by Manzini et al. (2025), according to which resilience functions as an emergent property of the organizational system. The interviews revealed that in companies where decision-making is centralized and dialogue is fragmented, the response to the crisis was disjointed and ineffective. In contrast, organizations that adopted, even intuitively, systems thinking managed to harmonize the interdependencies between departments, ensuring systemic stability that material resources alone cannot guarantee (Manzini et al., 2025).

Table 3. Differences in resilience (Local vs. International)

Criterion	Local / SME (R1, R2, R4, R6, R7, R8, R9)	Multinational (R3, R5, R10)
The source of the power	Leadership agility and expertise	Systemic standardization and resource allocation
Adaptation	In stride, through organic learning	Through procedural and technological updates
Client Relations	Partnership, friendship, and empathy	Predictability, compliance, branding

Source: Authors' own elaboration

The analysis indicates that transparency and two-way dialogue are not just ethical choices, but represent the technical foundation of corporate longevity. In full agreement with the perspectives of Kwiliński et al. (2025), the research shows that maintaining an honest exchange of information with the stakeholder ecosystem - from employees to authorities - functions as a risk buffer.

5. Conclusions

This research highlights the fact that resilience in the current context of polycrisis can no longer be reduced to a simple capacity for financial recovery, but represents a profound reconfiguration of organizational identity. By corroborating the data extracted from the ten interviews with emerging literature, the study demonstrates that the success of Romanian SMEs in the face of systemic shocks is the result of a symbiosis between management structures and the quality of communication flows. This approach validates the transition from reactive to strategic resilience, in which the organization not only withstands the impact, but processes it as a necessary stage in its internal evolution.

The study highlights a distinct profile of the Romanian SME manager, defined by the ability to become a "master of uncertainty." According to the model proposed by Mafimisebi et al. (2025), strategic resilience is fueled by decision-making agility that accepts unpredictability as a constant. Our results show that leaders who demonstrated openness to continuous learning and adaptation managed to transform logistical or personnel vulnerabilities into competitive advantages, marking the difference between passive survival and post-traumatic growth of the firm (Mafimisebi et al., 2025).

A nuanced conclusion of the research concerns the contrast between Romanian entrepreneurial firms and branches of multinational organizations. While the latter benefit from rigorous global procedures, local SMEs demonstrate superior "organic resilience" in times of sudden systemic change. This flexibility allows SMEs to recalibrate processes in real time, confirming that in volatile economic environments, flat structures and direct communication channels are often more effective than complex hierarchies in maintaining team cohesion.

Another fundamental dimension revealed is the convergence towards what Iacob and Cismaru (2019) define as "organizational intelligence." The results show that this information processing capacity is not only an intangible asset, but also becomes an essential strategic capability for maintaining legitimacy in the digital age (Iacob & Cismaru, 2019). The research confirms the hypothesis that economic sustainability is inextricably linked to systemic vision, where the ability to learn from disruptions transforms crisis from a critical point into a resource for procedural innovation.

The research also highlights that ethics and radical transparency in emerging economies have moved beyond superficial communication, becoming a component of systemic resilience. By correlating the data with the perspectives of Kwiliński et al. (2025), the study demonstrates that two-way dialogue and honesty in times of uncertainty function as mechanisms for reducing vulnerability. This approach allows organizations to maintain their reputational capital even in the face of major logistical or geopolitical disruptions by integrating social responsibility into the core of their business strategy.

Beyond the immediate managerial implications, the results of this study provide valuable insights for economic policymakers, in line with the strategic autonomy directions promoted at the European level (European Commission, 2023). The study highlights the need for support programs aimed at strengthening strategic literacy and communication resilience in the SME sector. Public policies should encourage the creation of trust-based collaborative networks, recognizing that the resilience of an emerging economy is the sum of the adaptive capacities of its component micro-systems.

Research Limitations

Despite its theoretical and practical contributions, this exploratory research has a number of limitations that also point the way for further studies. Firstly, the small sample size, based on ten case studies, allowed for an in-depth qualitative analysis, but limits the possibility of statistical generalization to the entire Romanian business environment. Second, the nature of the data collected introduces a degree of subjectivity in perception, as the responses of the leaders interviewed may be nuanced by social desirability or an implicit intention to protect the public image of the organization, despite assurances of confidentiality.

Last but not least, the geographical concentration of most of the companies analyzed in the Southeast region introduces a regional specificity in crisis management – such as critical dependence on port logistics – which limits the direct applicability of the results in areas with different economic dynamics.

Future research directions

Future research directions will follow a sequential mixed-methods design, structured into two complementary phases. Initially, the qualitative sample will be expanded to 20 organizations, facilitating the achievement of theoretical saturation and the inclusion of

different sectors of activity . The findings from these in-depth interviews will provide the foundation for developing a quantitative research instrument, which will subsequently be administered nationwide to a sample of 200 respondents (middle management and frontline employees). This approach will allow for the triangulation of strategic managerial vision with the systemic perception of the Romanian workforce, providing statistical validation for the organic-adaptive resilience model identified during the exploratory stage.

6. References

- Austin, L., & Jin, Y. (2017). Approaching ethical crisis communication with accuracy and sensitivity: Exploring common ground and gaps between journalism and public relations. *The Public Relations Journal*, 9(1).
- Benoit, W. L. (1997). Image repair discourse and crisis communication. *Public Relations Review*, 23(2), 177–186.
- Boin, A., 't Hart, P., Stern, E., & Sundelius, B. (2005). *The politics of crisis management: Public leadership under pressure*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bowen, S. A. (2005). A practical model for ethical decision making in issues management and public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 17(3), 191–216.
- Bryghtpath. (2014, May 21). *Communicating with stakeholders during a crisis: A guide*.
- Business Review. (2015, May 25). *Colectiv fire leads to tougher enforcement of fire safety laws, 40 venues shut down*.
- Cioacă, R.-E., & Briciu, V.-A. (2017). „Brădet Diary” – "The Opportunity of a Well-Managed Crisis." *Romanian Journal of Sociology*, 28(3–4), 303–317.
- Cismaru, D. M. (2022). Challenges for organizational reputation in the context of digital transformation. In D. M. Cismaru & R. Pricopie (Eds.), *Digital era and new management approaches* (pp. 45–62). Springer Nature.
- Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2012). The paracrisis: The challenges created by publicly managing crisis prevention. *Public Relations Review*, 38(3), 408–415.
- European Commission. (2023). *2023 Strategic Foresight Report: Sustainability and people's wellbeing at the heart of Europe's Strategic Autonomy* (COM/2023/376 final). Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Falkheimer, J., Heide, M., Nothhaft, H., von Platen, S., Simonsson, C., & Andersson, R. (2017). Is strategic communication too important to be left to communication professionals? Managers' and coworkers' attitudes towards strategic communication and communication professionals. *Public Relations Review*, 43(1), 91–101.
- Falkheimer, J., & Gentzel Sandberg, K. (2018). The art of strategic improvisation: A professional concept for contemporary communication managers. *Journal of Communication Management*, 22(2), 253–258.
- Grunnan, T., & Fridheim, H. (2017). Planning and conducting crisis management exercises for decision-making: The do's and don'ts. *EURO Journal on Decision Processes*, 5, 79–95.
- Heide, M., & Simonsson, C. (2014). Developing internal crisis communication: New roles and practices of communication professionals. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 19(2), 128–146.

- Heide, M., & Simonsson, C. (2015). Struggling with internal crisis communication: A balancing act between paradoxical tensions. *Public Relations Inquiry*, 4(2), 223–255.
- Holland, D., Seltzer, T., & Kochigina, A. (2021). Practicing transparency in a crisis: Examining the combined effects of crisis type, response, and message transparency on organizational perceptions. *Public Relations Review*, 47(2), 102017.
- Iacob, D., & Cismaru, D. M. (2019). *Organization theory and management* (2nd ed.). Comunicare.ro.
- Kim, S., & Krishna, A. (2017). Bridging strategy versus buffering strategy: Enhancing crisis management capability in public management for relational and reputational improvement, and conflict avoidance. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 27(5), 517–535.
- Kwiliński, A., et al. (2025). *Strategic resilience of organizations in the face of systemic shocks*. Publishing House of the Romanian Academy.
- Macnamara, J. (2022). *Organizational listening in public communication: Emerging theory and practice*. University of Technology Sydney.
- Mafimisebi, O. P., Ogunsade, A. I., Kehinde, W. O., Obembe, D., & Hadleigh-Dunn, S. (2025). Master of uncertainty: How strategic resilient organizations navigate crisis. *Journal of Strategic Management*. Advance online publication.
- Manzini, D., Oosthuizen, R., & Chikwanda, H. (2025). Enhancing organizational resilience through systems thinking. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 12, 101783.
- Men, L. R. (2015). The role of ethical leadership in internal communication: Influences on communication symmetry, leader credibility, and employee engagement. *Public Relations Journal*, 9(1).
- Sharples, L., Fletcher-Brown, J., Nieto-García, M., Sit, K., & Viglia, G. (2023). Managing crisis in the cruise industry: Using internal communications to foster workforce resilience. *Tourism Review*, 78(6), 1486–1505.