

BUILDING RESILIENT WORKFORCES: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK LINKING ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE, EMPLOYEE RESILIENCE, AND EMPLOYEE WELLBEING THROUGH THE LENS OF CONSERVATION OF RESOURCES THEORY

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Abstract: *The growing complexity of today's workplaces and the enduring effects of global crises have increased the need to understand how employees maintain wellbeing amid continuing resource demands. This conceptual paper, grounded in Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, presents an integrative framework that positions organizational climate and employee resilience as key contextual and personal resources associated with employee wellbeing. The framework proposes that a supportive organizational climate provides contextual resources that help employees acquire, retain, and protect valued resources. Employee resilience functions as a personal resource that facilitates adaptation to adversity and helps employees sustain positive functioning when resources are threatened or depleted. From a COR perspective, these processes may contribute to resource gain spirals that support employee wellbeing and reduce vulnerability to workplace stressors. The study uses an integrative review of existing empirical and theoretical literature to develop the proposed framework. The conceptualization extends the application of COR theory to organizational wellbeing by integrating organizational climate and employee resilience and offers practical implications for developing resilient and wellbeing-oriented workforces.*

Keywords: *Conservation of Resources theory, organizational climate, employee resilience, employee wellbeing, conceptual framework*

Introduction

In an environment characterized by global uncertainty, rapid organizational change, and recurring crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, employee wellbeing has emerged as a critical concern for organizations seeking to sustain performance and long-term stability (Johar et al., 2022). Employee wellbeing is increasingly understood not simply as the absence of stress or illness but as a multifaceted construct encompassing psychological, social, and occupational dimensions of positive functioning (Al Doghan & Talat, 2023; Fung et al., 2024). As work environments become increasingly volatile and unpredictable, the demand for resilient and adaptable employees has intensified (Hollaar et al., 2025; Lu et al., 2023). This growing emphasis on resilience and wellbeing presents organizations with the challenge of designing work environments that enable employees not only to cope with adversity but also to maintain positive functioning amid sustained uncertainty (Rurkkhum, 2024; Ruzungunde et al., 2023). Despite the expanding body of wellbeing research, the theoretical understanding of how organizational contexts interact with individual capacities to support sustainable employee wellbeing remains limited.

Organizational climate has emerged as a pivotal contextual factor shaping employees' psychological experiences in the workplace (Dumitriu et al., 2025). It reflects employees' shared perceptions of organizational practices, leadership support, communication openness, and fairness (Naji et al., 2022; Teetzen et al., 2023). A positive workplace climate can provide psychological and instrumental resources that support engagement, satisfaction, and wellbeing. However, the mechanisms through which these contextual resources are translated into individual wellbeing remain insufficiently understood (Nielsen et al., 2017). The role of employee resilience, characterized by the ability to adapt, recover, and grow in response to challenges, also warrants greater attention in this relationship (Riasnugrahani et al., 2024). Examining organizational climate and employee resilience together can therefore advance understanding of how organizational contexts and individual capacities may support sustainable employee wellbeing in demanding work environments (Atan & Gelirli, 2025).

Grounded in Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018), this study aims to provide a theoretical lens for explaining how contextual and personal resources may interact. COR theory posits that individuals are motivated to acquire, retain, and protect valued resources and that actual or threatened resource loss can generate psychological strain (Egozi Farkash et al., 2022; Westman et al., 2004). Resource acquisition can also initiate gain spirals that support wellbeing and adaptive functioning. From this theoretical perspective, organizational climate can be viewed as a contextual resource that may support employees' capacity to maintain and develop personal resources, including resilience. Resilient employees may be better equipped to withstand resource depletion and use available organizational resources in ways that support positive wellbeing outcomes. Despite this theoretical alignment, prior research has not sufficiently integrated organizational climate and employee resilience within a unified COR-based framework to explain employee wellbeing. Hence, this conceptual study develops an integrative framework addressing the relationship among organizational climate, employee resilience, and employee wellbeing through the lens of COR theory. The

framework proposes that a supportive workplace climate may strengthen employee resilience, which may in turn support higher levels of wellbeing.

Literature Review

This study's theoretical foundation is based on COR theory (Hobfoll, 2002), which posits that individuals strive to acquire, retain, and protect valued resources and that psychological strain can emerge when these resources are threatened or lost. Initially developed within the stress literature, COR theory has been increasingly applied in organizational behavior and wellbeing research because of its explanatory capacity for linking contextual and personal resources to employee outcomes. From a COR perspective, organizational climate represents a potential source of contextual resources, including supportive leadership, procedural fairness, and opportunities for development, that may shape employees' capacity to cope with work demands. At the individual level, employee resilience functions as a personal resource, reflecting employees' ability to adapt, recover, and grow in response to adversity (Chowdhury et al., 2025). Employee wellbeing can therefore be conceptualized as a dynamic outcome of resource gain and loss processes, whereby supportive climates and higher resilience may facilitate resource gain, while unsupportive climates and lower resilience may increase vulnerability to resource depletion (Nielsen et al., 2017). Despite the theoretical relevance of COR theory, prior organizational wellbeing research has often examined organizational climate and resilience as independent predictors, offering limited insight into how these resources may interact within an integrated resource-based process. Addressing this limitation, the present study employs a COR based perspective to integrate organizational climate and employee resilience as complementary resources and to provide a more comprehensive explanation of how employee wellbeing may be sustained in challenging organizational contexts.

Organizational Climate and Employee Wellbeing

Organizational climate is recognized as an important contextual factor influencing employee attitudes, behaviours, and wellbeing. Employees' perceptions of organizational policies, practices, and procedures constitute the psychological environment through which they interpret their work experiences (Schneider et al., 2017). Existing research indicates that organizational climate is positively associated with employee wellbeing, with supportive climates characterized by fairness, leadership support, open communication, and developmental opportunities linked to more positive psychological, work-related, and health-related outcomes. Empirical studies across sectors, including social services and healthcare, suggest that supportive climates can enhance self-efficacy, emotional stability, and perceived health (Amiri et al., 2023; Janiukštis et al., 2024). Despite this evidence, much of the literature adopts a predominantly outcome-oriented and direct-effects approach, focusing on whether organizational climate predicts wellbeing rather than explaining how and under what conditions this relationship may occur.

Intervention-based studies further indicate that improvements in team-level climate are associated with reductions in stress and work-family conflict and increases in physical and mental wellbeing (Reynolds & Bennett, 2023). Similarly, research on psychosocial safety climate links supportive climates to engagement, creativity, and innovation, which may contribute to wellbeing and organizational sustainability (Zadow et al., 2023). However, these

studies rarely integrate a theoretical process perspective that explains how contextual climate resources may be internalized and translated into sustained wellbeing outcomes.

From a COR perspective, organizational climate can be understood as a contextual resource that facilitates resource accumulation and protects employees from resource loss. Nevertheless, the literature remains limited in specifying the personal resource mechanisms through which organizational climate may influence wellbeing, particularly in environments characterized by high demands and uncertainty. This limitation underscores the need for models that move beyond direct associations and incorporate individual-level resource capacities to explain the climate–wellbeing relationship more comprehensively.

Employee Resilience and Employee Wellbeing

Employee resilience has emerged as a central personal resource in organizational research, reflecting employees' capacity to adapt, recover, and thrive under adversity and uncertainty (Kuntz et al., 2016; Lu et al., 2023). According to COR theory (Hobfoll, 2002), resilience may help individuals protect against resource depletion and sustain positive functioning in high-demand or stressful contexts. Empirical studies have reported positive associations between resilience and employee outcomes, including job satisfaction, work engagement, life satisfaction, and reduced burnout (Hanu & Khumalo, 2024; Dagodog, 2025; Ibrahim & Hussein, 2024; Pham et al., 2024; Rurkkhum, 2024). Despite these findings, prior research has predominantly examined resilience in isolation, with less attention to how organizational contexts such as climate may interact with resilience within the same theoretical framework. Studies also indicate that resilient employees may contribute to broader organizational functioning by sustaining engagement, fostering creativity, and supporting positive organizational conditions (Chowdhury et al., 2025; Panda & Singh, 2026). Nevertheless, the resource-related mechanisms linking resilience and employee wellbeing remain insufficiently integrated within a unified theoretical framework.

Recent evidence from post-pandemic and high-demand work environments highlights the relevance of resilience in responding to uncertainty, workload pressure, and organizational change (Elshaer, 2024). These findings underscore the value of considering resilience not merely as an individual trait but also as a personal capacity that operates within organizational contexts and may support employee wellbeing in complex and volatile environments. This perspective establishes the foundation for the proposed conceptual framework, which integrates organizational climate and employee resilience to explain employee wellbeing through a COR-based resource perspective.

The synthesis of organizational climate and employee resilience research therefore underscores the need for a resource-based framework that explains how contextual and personal resources may jointly support employee wellbeing, particularly in dynamic and high-demand work environments. Drawing on these insights, the present study develops a conceptual framework in which organizational climate is proposed to support employee resilience, which may in turn contribute to employee wellbeing. This framework seeks to bridge the identified theoretical gap and extend the application of COR theory in organizational contexts.

Methodology

This conceptual paper adopts an integrative review design to develop a theoretically grounded framework linking organizational climate, employee resilience, and employee wellbeing within the Malaysian public sector through the lens of COR theory. The review systematically synthesizes relevant empirical evidence to identify recurring relationships, theoretical patterns, and gaps among the focal constructs. Literature published between 2014 and 2025 was reviewed, with inclusion criteria focusing on empirical studies addressing organizational climate, employee resilience, and employee wellbeing across organizational contexts. A total of 87 empirical studies published between 2014 and 2025 were identified and initially considered for synthesis. Studies unrelated to the focal constructs, purely theoretical articles without an empirical basis, and opinion papers were excluded. Multiple academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Emerald Insight, and Google Scholar, were searched using combinations of keywords such as “organizational climate,” “employee resilience,” and “employee wellbeing,” together with Boolean operators to refine the search. Only peer-reviewed journal articles published in English were included.

During the screening phase, duplicate and irrelevant records were removed following title and abstract evaluation, yielding 43 articles for full-text assessment. The eligibility stage involved a comprehensive review of these articles against the established inclusion and exclusion criteria. As a result, 22 articles were retained as the most relevant studies for the conceptual synthesis.

The analysis employed an integrative synthesis approach to identify recurring theoretical themes, empirical patterns, and gaps in the literature that informed the construction of the proposed conceptual framework. Through this process, the study develops an evidence-informed model and derives practical implications for building resilient and wellbeing-oriented workforces. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria Type	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Publication Period	Studies published between 2014–2025	Studies published before 2014
Language	Articles published in English	Non-English publications
Study Type	Empirical studies	Reports, Review papers
Research Focus	Studies on organizational climate, employee resilience, and wellbeing	Studies unrelated to these constructs
Contexts	Public and private sectors	Studies not related to organizational or workplace settings
Publication Source	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Non-peer-reviewed publications, conference papers, or unpublished theses

The retained 22 studies were analysed using thematic synthesis. The process comprised three stages: (1) extracting and tabulating key findings and theoretical perspectives related to organizational climate, employee resilience, and employee wellbeing; (2) coding these findings into categories corresponding to contextual resources (organizational climate), personal

resources (employee resilience), and wellbeing outcomes; and (3) integrating these categories into overarching themes consistent with the Conservation of Resources (COR) framework. This approach enabled the identification of conceptual patterns, theoretical gaps, and practical implications that informed the development of the proposed conceptual framework.

Proposed Conceptual Framework

The proposed framework conceptualizes organizational climate and employee resilience as complementary factors that may support employee wellbeing through resource conservation and gain processes in the Malaysian public sector. A supportive organizational climate is characterized by perceptions of fairness, trust, open communication, and psychosocial safety, which may provide employees with resources to manage job demands. Such a climate may also support resilience by enabling employees to adapt to bureaucratic challenges, policy changes, and service pressures commonly encountered in public-sector settings. Employee resilience is conceptualized as a personal capacity involving adaptability, perseverance, and emotional regulation that may facilitate recovery from adversity and the maintenance of wellbeing. Within this framework, employee wellbeing refers to positive psychological functioning, including experiences such as satisfaction, engagement, and vitality, rather than merely the absence of strain. Consistent with COR theory, the framework proposes that supportive organizational conditions may contribute to resource gain processes and that employee resilience may help individuals maintain valued resources and sustain wellbeing. These constructs therefore provide a coherent basis for examining how Malaysian public institutions may foster resilient and wellbeing-oriented workforces. The proposed conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1.

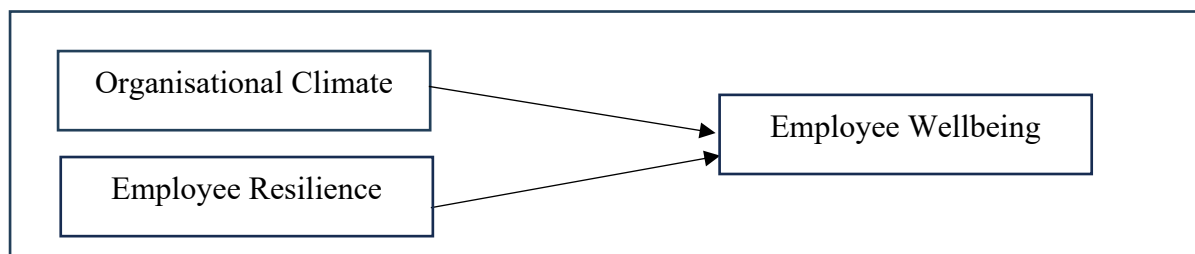


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework for Employee Wellbeing

Conclusion

In conclusion, this conceptual paper integrates organizational climate and employee resilience within a COR-based framework for understanding employee wellbeing. The proposed framework suggests that a supportive organizational climate may provide contextual resources that help employees develop and sustain resilience, enabling them to adapt to workplace challenges and organizational change. By integrating contextual and personal resources, the framework offers a resource-based perspective on workforce sustainability and highlights resilience as an important personal capacity in supporting positive employee functioning. The framework also provides a basis for future empirical research and may inform public-sector policies, leadership practices, and workplace interventions aimed at supporting employee wellbeing.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should empirically validate the proposed conceptual framework by investigating the relationships among organizational climate, employee resilience, and employee wellbeing across diverse organizational contexts, including public and private sector settings. Researchers may also examine potential mediating and moderating factors, including financial wellbeing, leadership style, and organizational support, that could influence these relationships. Comparative studies of public and private sector institutions may provide further insight into how organizational context shapes climate and resilience processes. Future studies can strengthen theoretical understanding and practical application by testing the proposed relationships using longitudinal, multilevel, qualitative, or mixed-method designs and by refining the framework across different institutional settings.

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