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Fostering Resilience in Co-operative Employees: Evaluating the Role of Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity (AMO)

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Abstract

The sustainability and success of co-operatives depend significantly on the resilience of their employees. This study examines the role of ability, motivation, and opportunity-enhancing practices in fostering employee resilience within the co-operative sector. Utilizing a comprehensive survey of 175 co-operative employees in the Klang Valley, Malaysia, the research analyzes how each component of the AMO model contributes to employee resilience. The findings demonstrate that motivation is the only significant factor that positively influences employee resilience while ability and opportunity do not show a direct significant effect on resilience among co-operative employee. These results highlight the importance of a comprehensive approach to human resource strategies to enhance resilience among co-operative employees, thereby supporting organizational sustainability and performance. Future research should explore the interactions between these components in various co-operative settings to further optimize strategies in fostering employee resilience.

Keywords: Employee resilience, AMO Model, Co-operative sector

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1.0 Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving global environment, employee resilience has become a critical factor for organizational sustainability. Multiple crises such as geopolitical conflicts, economic disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic, and escalating effects of climate change have placed unprecedented stress on businesses worldwide. These crises have underscored the importance of cultivating resilience, especially in terms of employee well-being and mental health, as businesses face increased uncertainty and disruption (Source: World Economic Forum, 2023).

Co-operatives, which often play a crucial role in local economies, are not immune to these challenges. The ability to adapt, innovate, and maintain employee motivation is essential in ensuring long-term viability. AMO (Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity) enhancing practices have gained significant attention as these practices can directly foster employee resilience (Indrawati et al., 2022). Resilience is no longer seen merely as an individual trait but as a critical organizational capability (Hanu & Khumalo, 2024). Co-operatives can benefit from an integrated approach that prioritizes both personal and professional well-being, empowering employees to navigate the complexities of the modern business landscape (Source: Global Resilience Report, 2023). In Malaysia, resilience in employees,

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particularly those in co-operatives, has become crucial due to the significant challenges faced during recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities within organizations, but also highlighted the resilience of co-operatives that managed to survive due to strong internal solidarity and government support. The cooperative structure fostered a sense of "gotong royong" (mutual aid), a concept that helped them endure through collective efforts (Yuhertiana et al., 2022).

However, there are broader concerns regarding the resilience and adaptability of the Malaysian workforce, as shown by the PwC Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey 2023. It reveals that 51% of Malaysian employees believe their organizations might not survive beyond the next decade if they do not undergo transformation, indicating a lack of long-term confidence in business sustainability. This underscores the importance of not just external support but also internal practices such as AMO-enhancing practices that can help improve resilience among co-operative employees. While the co-operative sector has shown resilience, the pressure from rapid technological development and evolving job requirements indicates that workforce skills must be continuously updated to maintain resilience. Approximately 50% of Malaysian employees believe their job skills will undergo significant changes within the next five years, further emphasizing the need for organizational practices that enhance employee adaptability and motivation (Source: Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey, 2023).

1.1 Problem Statement

Past studies have highlighted the role of organizational practices, such as AMO-enhancing strategies, in promoting resilience among employees. For instance, research by Boxall and Purcell (2016) shows that AMO practices, that focus on enhancing employee skills, motivation, and opportunities, lead to greater employee engagement and adaptability, which are crucial for coping with workplace stress and uncertainty. This is particularly relevant in co-operatives, where collective decision-making and mutual support mechanisms are integral to organizational resilience.

Recent studies further reinforce the continuous necessity of AMO practices in building resilience. One of the recent studies is the one conducted by Indrawati et al. (2022) which found that co-operatives in Malaysia and Indonesia required firm governmental support and internal solidarity among members to remain resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, research by Yang and Zhang (2023) found that AMO practices, when implemented effectively, increase employee capacity to respond to external challenges by fostering a sense of autonomy, belonging, and purpose, which are the key factors in resilience development. In the Malaysian context, the increasing pressure for organizational transformation, as indicated in the PwC survey, calls for stronger implementation of AMO practices. Hence, it can be deduced based on these findings that investment by organizations in enhancing employees' skills, motivation and opportunities would lead to higher efficiency among the employees to face complex challenges and ensure long-term organizational sustainability (Yang & Zhang, 2023). Incorporating these strategies into co-operatives can enhance their resilience, empowering employees to handle and overcome crises more efficiently.

While the literature provides strong evidence of the positive effects of AMO practices on employee resilience, several research gaps remain unbridged. First, there is limited empirical research focused specifically on the co-operative sector. Most studies on AMO practices and resilience were conducted in corporate or public sectors, with fewer focusing on the unique dynamics of co-operatives (Yang & Zhang, 2023). This is a significant gap, given the importance of collective decision-making and shared ownership in these organizations, which continue to rely on strong internal social dynamics. Secondly, most research on AMO-enhancing practices focused on developed economies, with fewer studies exploring these practices in emerging markets like Malaysia. Since co-operatives in developing countries often face distinct socio-economic challenges, understanding how AMO practices can be tailored to local contexts is crucial in maximizing their effectiveness (Indrawati et al., 2022). Additionally, while the theoretical link between AMO practices and resilience is well established, more empirical research is needed to quantify the impact of specific AMO strategies on resilience outcomes in co-operatives, particularly in response to external shocks like economic recessions or pandemics (Boxall & Purcell, 2016).

In conclusion, the synergy between AMO-enhancing practices and employee resilience is vital in fostering adaptability and sustainability within co-operatives. AMO practices not only equip employees with the skills and motivation needed to thrive, but they also create an environment that promotes collective resilience, particularly in the face of adversity. While existing theories like the AMO theory (Appelbaum et al., 2000), Conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 2011), and Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Deci & Ryan (2000) emphasised that more focused research is needed to explore the unique application of these practices in the co-operative sector. By addressing these gaps, these studies can offer deeper insights into how co-operatives can effectively implement AMO-enhancing practices to foster resilience and achieve long-term co-operatives success.

1.2 Research Objectives

The primary goal of this research is to investigate the impact of AMO-enhancing practices on employee resilience in Malaysian cooperatives. The main research objective to fulfill this research aim is to assess the relationship between AMO practices and employee resilience. In addition, this study also focuses to identify which AMO elements most strongly influence resilience in co-operative employees.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Employee Resilience

Employee resilience, defined as the capacity to adapt, recover, and thrive in the face of adversity, is a crucial trait in today's volatile business environment (Luthans et al., 2021). In the context of co-operatives, resilience becomes even more significant due to their

unique structure of collective decision-making and reliance on mutual support. The AMO-enhancing practices model is central in promoting resilience in co-operatives. AMO-enhancing practices are designed to boost employee capability (ability), foster intrinsic drive (motivation), and provide a conducive environment for growth (opportunity) (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). At the core of organizational resilience lies the concept of ability, which refers to the resources, skills, and structures that enable co-operatives to effectively respond to external shocks and internal challenges. The analysis revealed that cooperatives with strong governance mechanisms, regular member communication, and strategic planning processes demonstrated higher levels of adaptive capacity. These findings resonate with previous studies that emphasize the role of long-term planning and stakeholder involvement in enhancing organizational robustness (Chacon-Chamorro et al., 2025; Rhouiri et al., 2023). Furthermore, the democratic structure of co-operatives allows for decentralized decision-making, which enhances responsiveness and flexibility. This is an essential aspect of resilience in turbulent environments (Isenring, 2024).

The synergy between resilience and AMO practices lies in their mutual reinforcement. Employees who are equipped with the right skills (ability), motivated by a sense of purpose and aligned goals, and given opportunities to express their ideas and grow, are more likely to withstand external pressures and adapt to changes. In co-operatives, this synergy is further strengthened by a sense of collective ownership and shared responsibility, which empowers employees to act proactively and contribute to the overall resilience of the organization (Indrawati et al., 2022). For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, co-operatives that effectively implemented AMO-enhancing practices saw better adaptability and collaboration among employees, which was critical in maintaining organizational stability amidst economic disruptions (Yang & Zhang, 2023). In sum, AMO-enhancing practices and resilience are mutually dependent. While AMO-enhancing practices foster the environment needed for resilience to thrive, resilience, in turn, ensures that employees remain engaged, motivated, and capable of navigating uncertainties, which is particularly important in co-operative organizations where interdependence is a key organizational trait.

2.2 Ability, Motivation and Opportunity (AMO) Enhancing Practices

Behavioural theory and social exchange theory have been used in prior studies to explain the positive correlation between AMO-enhancing practice and employee resilience. This study took on a different strategy whereby is based on the AMO theory. Human resource activities may be categorized into three types according to AMO theory: ability-enhancing, motivation-enhancing, and opportunity-enhancing practices (Appelbaum et al., 2000). The AMO theory comprises three systems that characterise individual attributes in terms of verifying workers' possession of appropriate abilities, motivating employees to cultivate discretionary behaviours, and enabling them to achieve better organizational results.

Moreover, the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory by Hobfoll (2011) also provides insights into the AMO-resilience dynamic. According to this theory, individuals strive to acquire, retain, and protect resources, such as skills and social support, which are crucial for managing stress. AMO-enhancing practices can be viewed as key resources that help employees build a resource reservoir, enhancing their ability to cope with adversity and preventing resource depletion. In co-operatives, this is especially relevant as the shared ownership structure often places higher demands on employees, making resource conservation vital for sustained resilience.

2.2.1 Ability-Enhancing Practice

The relationship between ability-enhancing practices and employee resilience can be understood through the lens of the AMO theory and the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. Ability-enhancing practices, a key component of AMO theory, focus on developing employees' skills and competencies, which equip them with the capabilities to manage and adapt to challenges in the workplace (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). These practices directly bolster employee resilience by providing the resources needed to face adversity. From the COR theory perspective, employees are motivated to protect and build resources, such as skills and knowledge to prevent resource loss during stressful situations (Hobfoll, 2011). Ability-enhancing practices contribute to building this resource reservoir, helping employees mitigate stress and recover from challenges. In this way, both theories highlight that developing employees' abilities can boost their resilience by enhancing their resource capacity, enabling them to thrive in unfamiliar environments (Hanu & Khumalo, 2024; Halbesleben et al., 2014).

H1: Ability-enhancing practices have a positive effect on employees' resilience.

2.2.2 Motivation-Enhancing Practice

The relationship between motivation-enhancing practices and employee resilience is grounded in the AMO theory and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory as well. Motivation-enhancing practices, as defined by AMO theory, involve initiatives that align employee goals with organizational objectives, creating an environment where employees feel motivated and engaged (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). These practices may include providing meaningful work, recognition, and feedback, which encourage employees to voluntarily invest in their roles which in turn builds their resilience. In the context of co-operatives, where shared ownership and decision-making foster intrinsic motivation, these practices further support a sense of collective purpose and belonging, essential for resilience (Indrawati et al., 2022).

From the perspective of COR theory, motivation-enhancing practices act as key resources that employees can utilize in moments of stress or adversity (Hobfoll, 2011). According to COR, individuals strive to acquire and protect valuable resources, including psychological resources like motivation. When employees perceive strong motivation-enhancing practices, such as recognition and opportunities for career advancement, they accumulate these resources, which bolster their resilience in the face of challenges (Luthans et al., 2021). This is particularly relevant in co-operatives, where the sense of community and shared responsibility can serve as additional resources that further enhance resilience. In summary, motivation-enhancing practices provide employees with the

psychological and emotional resources necessary to cope with stress, leading to higher resilience. This relationship is particularly strong in the co-operative sector, where the collective nature of work strengthens both individual and organizational resilience.

H2: Motivation-enhancing practices have a positive effect on employees' resilience.

2.2.3 Opportunity-Enhancing Practice

According to the AMO theory, opportunity refers to creating an environment where employees are empowered to engage in meaningful decision-making, have access to growth opportunities, and can actively participate in organizational processes (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). These opportunities provide employees with the resources and support needed to navigate challenges and build resilience, especially in co-operatives where shared ownership and collective decision-making are integral to operations (Indrawati et al., 2022).

The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory further explains this dynamic by highlighting that individuals strive to obtain, retain, and protect resources that help them cope with stress (Hobfoll, 2011). Opportunity-enhancing practices can be seen as vital resources that employees can leverage to withstand pressures, recover from setbacks, and even grow stronger in the face of adversity. In cooperatives, where job demands can fluctuate due to market conditions or community-based decision-making, providing employees with opportunities to take on new roles, learn new skills, and have a voice in the direction of the organization enhances their resilience (Yang & Zhang, 2023).

H3: Opportunity-enhancing practices have a positive effect on employees' resilience.

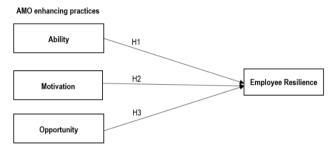


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Setting and Participants

The study employed a quantitative research approach to investigate the impact of AMO-enhancing practices on employee resilience in co-operatives. An online questionnaire survey was used to collect data from employees working in active co-operatives located in Greater Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. To ensure representation across co-operative types, the sample included credit co-operatives, service co-operatives and consumer co-operatives. An individual employee was selected as the unit of analysis for this research. The use of an online surveys offers several advantages that make them a highly effective data collection method. They are cost-effective, eliminating expenses related to printing, postage, and interviewer labor (Torrejón-Guirado et al., 2024). They also provide flexibility and convenience for respondents, allowing participation at their preferred time and place, which can enhance response rates (Khan et al., 2022; Stewart & Harte, 2015). Given the high level of digital literacy among co-operative employees in urban areas, the online format improved accessibility and response rates.

Moreover, the study employed the snowball sampling technique due to the absence of an appropriate sampling frame including all employees in the co-operative sector. The snowball sampling process unfolded in three sequential steps. Firstly, based on initial contact, invitations were sent via email to identified contact persons. Initial participants were recruited from those who responded positively. Next is referral phase whereby each respondent who completed the survey was asked to refer colleagues from the same or other co-operative organizations they were affiliated with. Finally, researchers followed up on referrals to confirm eligibility and invite new participants until the desired sample size was achieved and data saturation appeared evident.

In this study, the G*Power sampling size determinant was employed to determine the sample size by considering research predictors (variables). The model used in this investigation consisted of three predictors. When employing G*Power with an effect size of 0.15, alpha of 0.05, and power of 0.95, the minimal sample size needed was a mere 130. Consequently, an overall total of 300 questionnaires were distributed, exceeding the specified minimum sample size and addressing the problem of non-response from the participants. In light of this, 175 samples are considered to be an appropriate sample size, which is higher than the minimum number required. For data quality control procedures, reliability analyses were conducted to assess the reliability of the measurement scales. These procedures ensured that the final dataset was robust, reliable, and suitable for inferential statistical analysis.

3.2 Measures

The AMO-enhancing practices scale was derived from the research conducted by Andreeva and Sergeeva (2016) on knowledge sharing among school instructors and modified to suit the specific settings of this study. The scale had 13 items that were scored on a 7-point

Likert Scale with answers ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). The employee resilience scale was formed by Connor & Davidson (2003) and validated by Yang and Zhang (2023). This scale consisted of ten questions. The respondents were asked to respond on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). To ensure measurement validity and reliability, all constructs were assessed using multi-item scales adapted from established instruments in prior empirical studies. The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) is widely used and validated in various contexts, including healthcare professionals and other occupational groups. It has been shown to effectively measure resilience and its impact on job performance and mental health. The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) is widely used and validated in various contexts, including healthcare professionals and other occupational groups. It has been shown to effectively measure resilience and its impact on job performance and mental health (Chang et al., 2025; Amer et al., 2024 & Qiu et al., 2020). Recent studies have further validated the scale, confirming its reliability and applicability across different cultural contexts and occupational settings (Qiu et al., 2020 and Liu et al., 2023).

3.3 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize the demographic data. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between AMO-enhancing practices and employee resilience. Statistical software like SPSS was used for this purpose, ensuring robustness in the analysis.

4.0 Findings

4.0 Reliability Results

The reliability of this study, was measured by Cronbach's Alpha which assesses the internal consistency of the constructs. Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0 to 1, where values closer to 1 indicate higher reliability as shown in Table 1 below. For ability-enhancing practices, a value of 0.923 indicating strong interrelatedness among the items and consistent measurement of the construct. Opportunity-enhancing practices score good reliability (0.892), reflecting stable and coherent responses across the measured items. The construct of resilience (0.929) is shown to have excellent reliability, indicating a high degree of consistency across the items measuring this concept. While the Motivation-enhancing practices subscale returned a lower but still acceptable value of 0.716, this suggests moderate internal consistency and may indicate some variability in how respondents interpreted or responded to individual items within this dimension. Overall, these reliability scores support the validity and robustness of the measurement instruments used in this study, ensuring confidence in the data collected and the conclusions drawn from it

| Table 1 Reliability | | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Latent Variables | Cronbach's Alpha | | | | |
| Ability (AMO Model) | 0.923 | | | | |
| Motivation (AMO Model) | 0.716 | | | | |
| Opportunity (AMO Model) | 0.892 | | | | |
| Resilience | 0.929 | | | | |

4.1 Discussion

Based on the correlation table (Table 2), AMO-enhancing practices (ability, motivation, and opportunity) show varied relationships with employee resilience in the co-operative sector. Motivation-enhancing practices motivation-enhancing practices demonstrated the strongest positive association with employee resilience (r = 0.327, p < 0.001). This indicates that when employees feel supported, valued, and intrinsically motivated, they are more likely to exhibit resilience in the face of organizational disruptions or external shocks. These findings align with previous research suggesting that motivational systems significantly influence well-being, particularly during crises such as the pandemic (Johar et al., 2022; Ojo et al., 2021). In contrast, ability-enhancing practices showed a weaker but statistically significant correlation with resilience (r = 0.191, p = 0.006), suggesting that while skills development and resource availability contribute to resilience, their impact may be less pronounced compared to motivational factors. This finding is consistent with studies highlighting the moderating role of job autonomy and contextual support in translating training into operational resilience (Ataburo et al., 2025). Similarly, opportunity-enhancing practices exhibited a moderate positive correlation with resilience (r = 0.226, p = 0.001), indicating that empowering employees through participation in decision-making and professional growth opportunities supports resilience-building.

Regression analysis further clarified these relationships. Among the three AMO dimensions, only motivation was found to have a statistically significant direct effect on employee resilience (β = 0.504, p = 0.001). This suggests that in the context of Malaysian cooperatives, fostering a motivating work environment through recognition, meaningful roles, and supportive leadership is critical for enhancing resilience (Pertheban et al., 2023). The lack of significance for ability and opportunity may point to indirect pathways or mediating influences not captured in this study, demanding further investigation in future studies.

The model's coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.111$) indicates that approximately 11.1% of the variance in employee resilience is explained by the AMO constructs. According to Cohen's (1988) benchmarks, this reflects a weak explanatory power (Hair et al., 2019), suggesting that other variables such as leadership capabilities, technology adoption, or environmental support may play important roles in shaping resilience within this context (Zahari et al., 2022; Lestari et al., 2024). Despite this limitation, the statistical significance of the

model (p < 0.01) confirms that the AMO framework still offers a useful foundation for understanding resilience mechanisms in cooperatives. These findings suggest that motivation serves as the most influential driver of resilience among Malaysian co-operative employees, followed by opportunity and ability. However, the relatively low R² value highlights the need for future research to explore additional variables such as leadership styles, digital transformation, or community engagement, which may interact with or enhance the effects of AMO practices on resilience outcomes.

Table 2 Correlations and Coefficients Result

Correlations OPPORTUNIT ABILITY RESILIENCE MOTIVATION .525** .327** MOTIVATION Pearson Correlation 469 Sig. (1-tailed) < 001 < 001 < 0.01 175 N 175 175 175 704 ABILITY Pearson Correlation .469 191 Sig. (1-tailed) <.001 <.001 .006 N 175 175 175 175 .525** 704 OPPORTUNITY Pearson Correlation 226 Sig. (1-tailed) < 001 < 001 001 175 175 N 175 175 .327** .191** 226 RESILIENCE Pearson Correlation 1 Sig. (1-tailed) <.001 .006 N 175 175 175 175

Coefficients

| | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | |
|-------|-------------|-----------------------------|------------|------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Model | | В | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
| 1 | (Constant) | 34.366 | 4.135 | | 8.310 | <.001 |
| | MOTIVATION | .504 | .151 | .286 | 3.331 | .001 |
| | ABILITY | .017 | .266 | .006 | .063 | .950 |
| | OPPORTUNITY | .135 | .201 | .072 | .670 | .504 |

a. Dependent Variable: RESILIENCE

5.0 Limitations and Future Research

The study examined the relationship between AMO-enhancing practices and employee resilience. The results revealed significant correlations between the variables, with Motivation showing the strongest positive relationship with both Opportunity and Resilience. These findings suggest that when cooperatives provide opportunities and foster motivation, employees are more likely to develop resilience, which is crucial for adapting to challenges in the workplace. It supports the theoretical understanding that resilience is not solely an instinctive trait but can be cultivated through organizational practices. The study also highlights the need for more integrative models that link the AMO theory with psychological constructs like resilience, extending the applicability of the AMO model beyond performance outcomes. For practitioners, this research underscores the importance of focusing on HR practices that enhance employee motivation and opportunities especially in the co-operative sector. Managers should design suitable interventions and provide resources that support employees in fostering employee resilience. This could include leadership training, professional development opportunities, and mental health support programs. By investing in AMO-enhancing practices, co-operatives can better equip their workforce to handle stress and adversity, ultimately contributing to organizational sustainability.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study was cross-sectional; therefore causality cannot be firmly established. Second, the sample was limited to a specific sector or region, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, while the study focused on AMO-enhancing practices, other variables such as organizational culture, leadership style, or personal coping mechanisms were not examined. From a measurement perspective, while the scales used demonstrated strong internal consistency, future studies could benefit from incorporating mixed-method approaches, such as qualitative interviews or case studies, to enrich understanding of how employees perceive and experience AMO-enhancing practices. Additionally, multi-source data collection (e.g., including supervisor ratings or organizational records) could enhance validity and reduce potential response bias. Future research can explore the longitudinal effects of AMO-enhancing practices on resilience to establish causality. Expanding the scope to different industries and geographical regions would provide a broader understanding of how these relationships vary across different contexts. Moreover, integrating variables like leadership behavior or exploring the role of individual psychological traits (e.g., optimism or emotional intelligence) could offer deeper insights into the mechanisms through which AMO-enhancing practices influence employee resilience.

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^{**.} Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

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