

SMEs' resilience from continuous improvement lenses

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Abstract

Purpose

The business environment is increasingly volatile, complex, uncertain and ambiguous. Today, COVID-19 represents a super-disruption situation. This paper aims to explore small and medium-sized enterprises' (SMEs') resilience from continuous improvement lenses. It explores the role of continuous improvement in building organizational resilience across SMEs.

Design/methodology/approach

A Delphi methodology has been adopted to capture evidence and opinions from 38 experts from several Jordan-based SMEs through three-online rounds.

Findings

The study finds that continuous improvement enhances SMEs' resilience in the short term and long term. It can translate the concept of resilience into tangible working constructs for SMEs in visualizing and making decisions about their risks, adapting, absorbing changes and prevailing over time. The role of continuous improvement in building organizational resilience is fourfold; continuous improvement is a cyclical process; it has a vital cultural aspect and can be considered a business philosophy. It also emphasizes a holistic change approach based on small but constant changes. However, SMEs' leaders must consider several issues for effective continuous improvement, including a continuous improvement culture and a results-focused approach.

Originality/value

Organizational resilience has been studied across various contexts; however, there are still unanswered questions for SMEs' resilience. This study contributes to theory and practice by examining the role of continuous improvement in SMEs' resilience.