

Innovation Culture at the Heart of Organizational Resilience: A Theoretical Analysis of Moroccan Startups

La culture d'innovation au cœur de la Résilience organisationnelle : Analyse théorique des Startups marocaines

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Abstract

This article analyzes the impact of innovation culture on organizational resilience, using Moroccan startups as a case study. In an unstable environment marked by frequent crises, innovation culture proves to be an essential strategic lever. Using a qualitative methodology based on documentary analysis and Denison and Mishra's (1995) model, the study explores the dimensions of mission, adaptability, involvement and coherence. The results show that a culture of innovation fosters agility, internal collaboration and a clear strategic vision, thereby enhancing startups' ability to overcome crises. However, limitations remain, such as a lack of formalization of practices and financial constraints. Future research, including empirical studies and the integration of external factors, would deepen our understanding of the links between innovation culture and organizational resilience.

Keywords: Innovation culture; Startup; Morocco; Resilience; Denison model.

Résumé

Cet article analyse l'impact de la culture d'innovation sur la résilience organisationnelle en prenant pour cas d'étude les startups marocaines. Dans un environnement instable marqué par des crises fréquentes, la culture d'innovation se révèle être un levier stratégique essentiel. À travers une méthodologie qualitative basée sur l'analyse documentaire et le modèle de Denison et Mishra (1995), l'étude explore les dimensions de mission, adaptabilité, implication et cohérence. Les résultats montrent que la culture d'innovation favorise l'agilité, la collaboration interne et une vision stratégique claire, renforçant ainsi la capacité des startups à surmonter les crises. Cependant, des limites subsistent, telles qu'un manque de formalisation des pratiques et des contraintes financières. Des recherches futures, incluant des études empiriques et l'intégration des facteurs externes, permettraient d'approfondir la compréhension des liens entre culture d'innovation et résilience organisationnelle.

Mots clés : Culture d'innovation ; Startup ; Maroc ; Résilience ; Modèle de Denison.

Introduction

In a world marked by increasingly frequent economic, social and health crises, the ability of organizations to resist and adapt has become a major strategic challenge. This resistance, often referred to as organizational resilience, largely depends on the corporate culture that shapes internal behaviors, processes and decisions. Among the many forms of organizational culture, innovation culture stands out as an essential lever for strengthening the ability of organizations to navigate uncertain environments, through agility, creativity and proactive challenge management. Although several studies have examined the impact of innovation culture on organizational resilience, these are still insufficient, particularly in specific contexts such as Moroccan startups. These young companies, faced with limited resources and highly dynamic environments, offer a unique field of analysis for understanding how innovation can become a driver of resilience.

The question posed by this study is as follows: **To what extent does the culture of innovation contribute to strengthening organizational resilience in the context of Moroccan startups?** To answer this question, a methodology based on a literature review was adopted, drawing on Denison and Mishra's (1995) model. This model, with its four key dimensions (mission, adaptability, involvement, coherence), enables an in-depth analysis of the cultural components that support innovation and resilience.

This research is structured in two main parts. The first part explores the theoretical framework of innovation culture and organizational resilience, while the second applies Denison and Mishra's model to analyze these dynamics in the case of Moroccan startups. The aim of this work is to provide concrete insights for strengthening the innovative capacity and resilience of organizations in uncertain environments.

1. Theoretical foundations

1.1. Corporate culture, a “cosmopolitan” concept

The concept of “corporate culture” is inspired by the everyday term “culture”, except that Elliot Jacques was the first author to use this to describe an organization, in his work at the Tavistock Institute in England (Jacques, 1952). Referring to basic theories, corporate culture, as studied by authors such as Schein (1985) and Weick (1995), is a dynamic system of shared meanings that emerges from social interactions within the organization. This culture, as a “common grammar”, enables organizational members to give meaning to their experiences, build a collective identity and coordinate their actions, which are based on socialization, learning and knowledge transmission mechanisms (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984).

Defined as an implicit framework structuring internal relationships and enabling the resolution of organization-specific problems, some recent research has asserted that organizational culture plays a strategic role in giving meaning to collective actions and facilitating adaptation to environmental changes (Frățiță & Robescu, 2023). Moreover, it is shaped by managers, reinforced by organizational practices, and serves as a lever for internal cohesion and competitive differentiation (AIT ALLA & RAJÂA, 2022). It is thus a necessary tool for coordinating members, promoting commitment and directing efforts towards strategic objectives (Senkel & Frățiță, 2023). Thus, Organizational culture, defined by its types (group, developmental, hierarchical, rational), influences behavior at work, with group culture reducing incivilities, while developmental culture may increase them (Vegas-Gallo et al., 2025).

As a result, corporate culture is a major strategic lever for organizations. It strengthens employee commitment, reduces departure intentions by fostering their professional development, and improves their sense of belonging (Palma-Moreira et al., 2024). It also enhances the organization's attractiveness as an employer, essential for attracting and retaining skills in competitive sectors (Lee & Choi, 2024). In addition, it supports innovation by enabling a balance between short-term strategies and long-term growth objectives (AlSaied & McLaughlin, 2024). Thus, organizational culture is a key asset for the success and sustainability of companies, and lies in its key role in facilitating strategic transformations (Pendharkar, Yadav, & Thanki, 2024).

In sum, the studies cited above shed light on the notion of “organizational culture”, positioning it as an essential and strategic concept in a human resources management rationale.

1.2. Innovation culture

The culture of innovation in an organization can be defined as the set of shared norms, practices, and values that foster and support the intention to innovate, experimentation, and internal and external collaboration (Zygmunt & Dvouletý, 2024). It acts as a multidimensional framework that encompasses key elements such as innovative leadership, collaborative teams, a supportive organizational environment, and strong ties with external stakeholders (Davies & Buisine, 2017). This culture encourages the acquisition, sharing and application of knowledge through internal and external networks, facilitating the development of new ideas, products and processes (Bakalli & Elmqaddem, 2024; Janssen et al., 2022). In addition, it is proving to

be an essential strategic lever for improving competitiveness, responding to environmental change, and supporting organizational sustainability (Azzi & El Kahri, 2024).

From another angle, Innovation Culture is based on several key dimensions, including the intention to foster innovation, supporting infrastructure, market orientation, and an environment conducive to innovation implementation (Asnany et al., 2022; Zhao & Yang, 2021). This culture is supported by elements such as visionary leadership, collaboration, and adaptation to dynamic market changes, which enable organizations to be more resilient and successful (Bamel et al., 2024). It plays a crucial role in organizational transformation by providing a framework conducive to creativity, co-creation and performance improvement through innovative processes, such as agile management or the integration of advanced technologies into the value chain (Zhao & Yang, 2021; Asnany et al., 2022).

1.3. Organizational resilience: the key to adaptation in an uncertain environment

Organizational resilience is increasingly recognized as an essential capability enabling organizations to withstand, adapt to and recover from crises while maintaining long-term performance. Gemici, Alpkın and Giglio (2024) define resilience as the ability to leverage technological management capabilities to foster both stability and innovation in dynamic environments. Adaptability and agility are seen as fundamental pillars of resilience, with Micouleau and Robert (2024) emphasizing adaptability during crises and Ruamchart (2023) indicating that agility is the cornerstone of post-pandemic recovery in supply chains. Bernard and Loup-Escande (2023) further illustrate how resilience manifests itself in operational adjustments during major disruptions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Importantly, resilience is not limited to specific contexts; it is linked to improved performance across all sectors, as demonstrated by Suryaningtyas et al. (2019), who highlight the role of resilient leadership and organizational culture in promoting sustainability. Furthermore, resilience supports organizational innovation and resource optimization, as shown by Kennedy and Linnenluecke (2022), who link resilience to circular economy practices that promote sustainable production and resource efficiency. Collectively, these studies emphasize that organizational resilience is essential in a rapidly changing global landscape, enabling organizations to navigate uncertainty and seize new opportunities.

From another perspective, organizational resilience is key to navigating crises and improving business performance, as it integrates a range of strategic and operational factors. Technological integration, such as Industry 4.0 and blockchain, is a key enabler, strengthening supply chains and organizational adaptability, as highlighted by Lopes de Sousa

Jabbour et al. (2023), Junaid et al. (2023), and Shahzad et al. (2024). Similarly, innovation and resilient leadership are essential, with Ranucci and Wang (2024), Garrido-Moreno et al. (2024), and Morales et al. (2019) demonstrating that organizations able to adapt quickly are better equipped to overcome crises. Collaborative approaches, including partnerships and diversification strategies, also emerge as key resilience factors, as highlighted by Badwan (2024) and Barbieri et al. (2024). In addition, the ambidexterity of industrial clusters - the balance between efficiency and flexibility - plays an important role in promoting resilience, as demonstrated by Wichard and Wirtz (2024). Together, these studies assert that resilience is the cornerstone for overcoming crises and achieving sustainable business growth in an ever-changing economic landscape.

1.4. The link between organizational resilience and a culture of innovation

This link lies in their complementarity to enable organizations to adapt and thrive in uncertain environments. A culture of innovation fosters agility and adaptability, two essential pillars of organizational resilience, as Micouleau and Robert (2024) and Ruamchart (2023) point out, highlighting the importance of innovation in adjusting practices and responding to crises. Furthermore, the integration of emerging technologies, such as Industry 4.0 and blockchain (Lopes de Sousa Jabbour et al., 2023; Shahzad et al., 2024), reflects an innovation-driven organizational culture, strengthening supply chains and adaptability.

Innovation also plays a key role in proactive crisis management, as Bernard and Loup-Escande (2023) point out, by enabling strategic operational adjustments. Furthermore, a culture of innovation encourages collaboration and resilient leadership (Ranucci and Wang, 2024; Garrido-Moreno et al., 2024), elements that contribute to an organization's ability to bounce back from disruptions. In sum, innovation is a strategic driver of organizational resilience by integrating collaborative practices, optimizing resources and fostering organizational ambidexterity (Wichard and Wirtz, 2024), essential for navigating unstable economic contexts and seizing opportunities.

In short, organizational resilience and a culture of innovation are intrinsically linked, as a culture of innovation provides the tools and environment needed to navigate crises effectively. By encouraging creativity, adaptability and collaboration, a culture of innovation strengthens the ability of organizations to respond rapidly to disruption while maintaining their competitiveness (Zhao & Yang, 2021). Furthermore, it facilitates the adoption of innovative technological and organizational solutions, which support not only business continuity but also improved performance in times of crisis (Asnany et al., 2022). In this way,

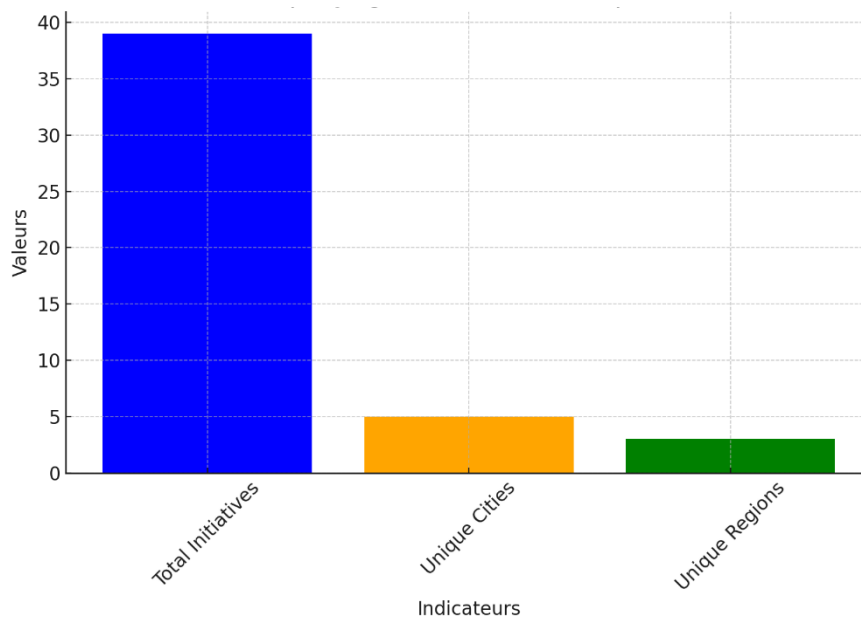
the culture of innovation acts as a strategic driver of resilience, enabling organizations to transform challenges into sustainable opportunities (Bamel et al., 2024).

2. Analysis of the Innovation Culture in Moroccan Startups: Challenges and Perspectives

2.1. Overview of startups in Morocco

Morocco, as an emerging hub of innovation in North Africa, is seeing growing momentum in its entrepreneurial ecosystem, particularly through the development of startups. In this study, official data from the Moroccan data site (www.data.gov.ma) were used to provide an overview of entrepreneurial initiatives in Morocco through descriptive statistics. We calculated the total number of initiatives, as well as the numbers of unique cities and regions represented. We then counted the number of initiatives by region and city, in order to identify the most active geographical areas. In this way, the analysis focused on three key indicators: the geographical distribution of initiatives by region and city, and a global overview of the total number of initiatives identified.

Figure 1 : Overview of statistics



Source : Autor

The results show that startups are unevenly distributed across the regions, with a notable concentration in strategic economic regions such as Casablanca-Settat, Rabat-Salé-Kénitra and Marrakech-Safi. Major cities such as Casablanca, Rabat and Mohammedia dominate in terms of the number of initiatives. The analysis revealed 39 distinct initiatives, spread across 5 cities and 3 unique regions, illustrating a centralization of entrepreneurial efforts in the country's economic hubs.

These data show a geographic centralization of startups, reflecting inequalities in access to the resources and infrastructures essential to their development. Casablanca-Settat, as the country's economic powerhouse, plays a pivotal role, attracting a large proportion of start-up entrepreneurs thanks to its innovation-friendly environment and institutional support.

2.2. Applying Denison and Mishra's model to Moroccan startups

Denison and Mishra's (1995) model is a widely recognized theoretical framework for analyzing the impact of organizational culture on performance. To analyze the innovation culture of Moroccan startups using Denison and Mishra's (1995) model, a qualitative methodology based on documentary analysis was adopted. Data were collected from a number of secondary sources, including institutional reports from organizations such as Startup Maroc, Maroc PME and the World Bank, as well as academic and sector publications on innovation in the MENA region. Specialized press articles and testimonials from entrepreneurs were also consulted to identify concrete examples of innovative practices within Moroccan startups.

In addition, an analysis of startup websites provided information on their missions, strategies and innovation initiatives. This data was organized around the four dimensions of Denison's model (Mission, Adaptability, Involvement and Consistency) using thematic coding, allowing the strengths and weaknesses specific to the Moroccan context to emerge. The orientation of the analysis was guided by a concern to reflect local specificities, such as the ability of startups to innovate with limited resources and adapt to unstable environments. This contextual and inductive approach has enabled us to propose a structured and usable vision of the culture of innovation in these organizations.

As we mentioned in the theoretical section, in the context of innovation culture, this model is particularly relevant, as it links cultural elements that are essential to an organization's ability to innovate and adapt to change. Mission guides startups towards innovative strategic goals, while adaptability reflects their ability to respond to changing market needs. Employee involvement promotes active participation in innovation processes, while consistency ensures internal alignment of efforts. The following table summarizes our analysis:

Table 1 : Synthesis of Denison and Mishra's model for Moroccan startups

Dimension	Observed strengths	Possible weaknesses
Mission	Clear objectives in innovative sectors	Lack of strategic formalization
Adaptability	Crisis responsiveness	Structural and financial constraints
Implication	Collaboration and commitment from young talent	Lack of continuing education programs
Coherence	Aligning values in small teams	Weak standardization of processes

Source : Autor

2.3. Analysis of the impact of corporate culture on organizational resilience

Based on statistics on Moroccan startups and the application of Denison and Mishra's (1995) model, the analysis shows that corporate culture, particularly in the context of innovation, has a direct and structuring impact on organizational resilience. Here are the main arguments :

- **Mission and strategic focus:** Moroccan startups demonstrate a clear focus on innovation in specific sectors (fintech, agritech, green tech), enabling them to define strategic objectives tailored to market challenges. However, the lack of formalization of these strategies sometimes limits their ability to respond effectively to crises, suggesting that establishing a clear, shared mission strengthens resilience.
- **Adaptability and flexibility:** A high degree of adaptability was observed, with Moroccan startups responding rapidly to crises by adjusting their business models and adopting emerging technologies. This responsiveness, which stems from their culture of innovation, is a key pillar of their resilience. However, financial and structural constraints sometimes hamper this adaptability, underlining the importance of a more favorable economic and institutional environment.
- **Employee involvement and commitment:** The involvement of young talent, combined with increased collaboration, stimulates creativity and innovation within startups. This internal dynamic fosters greater organizational resilience, as employees feel invested in problem-solving processes. However, the absence of ongoing training programs limits the potential for innovation and, consequently, long-term resilience.
- **Internal consistency and alignment:** Aligning values within small teams ensures organizational cohesion, enabling efforts to be channeled towards common goals. This

promotes a unified response to crises. However, the absence of standardized processes can lead to inefficiencies in critical situations, limiting startups' ability to maximize their resilience.

In short, a corporate culture based on innovation plays a decisive role in the organizational resilience of Moroccan startups. It enables them to demonstrate agility, creativity and adaptability in the face of crises. However, to maximize this impact, efforts need to be made to further structure their strategic practices, develop internal skills through training, and standardize key processes. Denison and Mishra's model thus reveals that a culture of innovation, when reinforced by solid organizational pillars, can transform challenges into lasting opportunities.

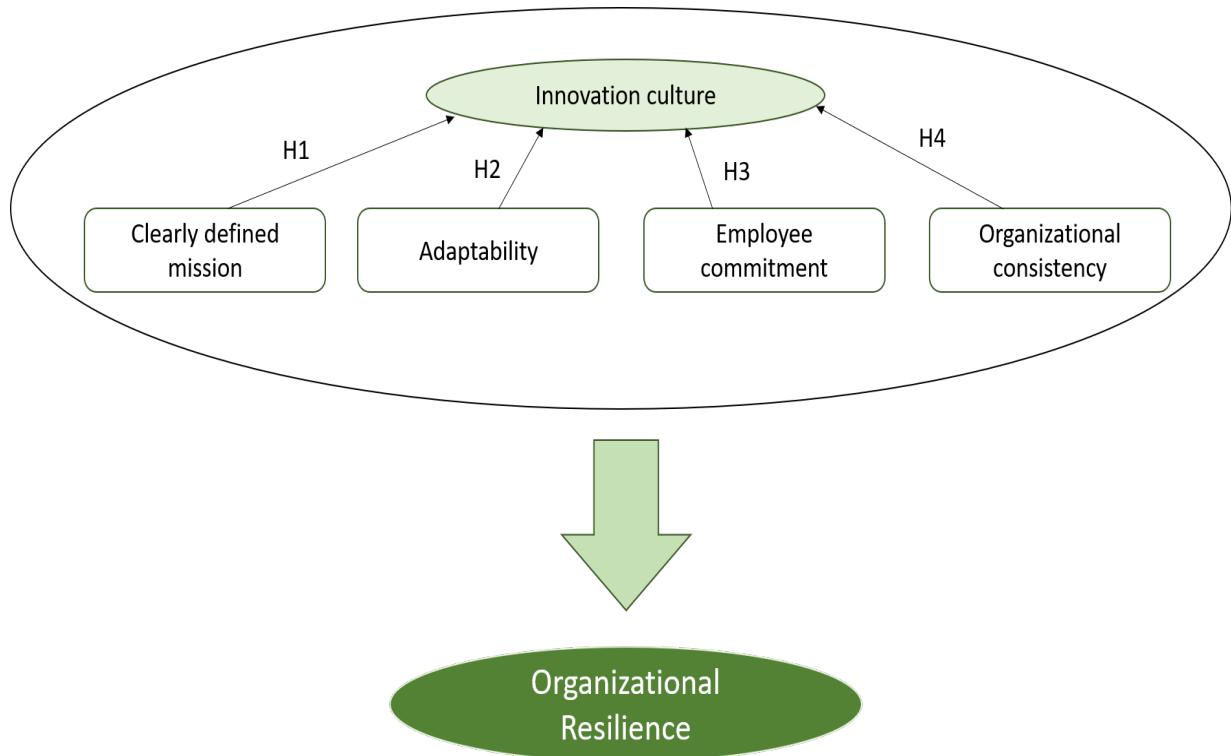
2.4. Literature-based Hypotheses: Towards an Empirical Analysis of Innovation Culture and Organizational Resilience

To further analyze the impact of innovation culture on the organizational resilience of Moroccan startups, recommendations can be made in the form of hypotheses, based on existing literature. According to Denison and Mishra (1995), a clearly defined mission is essential to guide organizational efforts. Thus, an explicitly innovation-oriented mission could strengthen the organizational resilience of Moroccan startups, enabling them to better navigate unstable environments.

Furthermore, as shown by Lopes de Sousa Jabbour et al. (2023), adaptability, particularly through the adoption of innovative technologies, is a key factor in resilience. This hypothesis is particularly relevant for Moroccan startups, which are often confronted with economic and social crises. In addition, employee commitment, supported by ongoing training programs, can play a decisive role, as suggested by Garrido-Moreno et al. (2024), who associate team involvement with an increased ability to overcome crises.

In addition, organizational coherence, analyzed by Suryaningtyas et al. (2019), could also enhance resilience by ensuring a collective and aligned response to disruptions. Finally, external factors, such as institutional support and access to finance, identified by Barbieri et al. (2024) as moderators of the impact of innovation culture, need to be taken into account in the context of Moroccan startups. These hypotheses could be explored in future studies, combining quantitative surveys and statistical analyses (multiple regressions, moderator analyses), to empirically validate the relationships between these variables and enrich understanding of their impact. Figure 2 shows a schematic diagram of future assumptions :

Figure 2 : Schematic diagram of future assumptions



Source : Author

Conclusion

This study explored the impact of innovation culture on organizational resilience, focusing on the specific case of Moroccan startups. Using Denison and Mishra's (1995) model, and based on an in-depth literature review, it demonstrated that innovation culture is a strategic lever for strengthening the ability of organizations to adapt to crises and thrive in uncertain environments. The results show that elements such as a clearly defined mission, strong adaptability, employee involvement and organizational coherence are essential to building sustainable organizational resilience. However, certain weaknesses, such as a lack of strategic formalization, insufficient ongoing training and financial constraints, are holding back the full potential of Moroccan startups in this field.

However, this research has several limitations. Firstly, the analysis is based exclusively on secondary data, which limits access to more nuanced information, particularly on the implicit beliefs and practices of organizations. Secondly, Denison and Mishra's model, while useful for structuring the analysis, does not take into account contextual specificities in Morocco, such as socio-cultural or institutional factors, which could influence innovation culture and resilience. Finally, the interactions between the dimensions studied and their evolution over time have not been explored in detail.

For future research, it would be relevant to deepen this analysis by conducting empirical field studies, through surveys or interviews with Moroccan startup managers and employees. A comparative perspective between different sectors or countries could also enrich our understanding of these dynamics. Furthermore, the integration of external factors, such as public policies or the entrepreneurial ecosystem, could provide a more global view of the influence of innovation culture on organizational resilience. Finally, longitudinal monitoring would enable us to observe how these relationships evolve over time, particularly in response to future crises. These lines of research would contribute to offering practical recommendations for the development of Moroccan startups and the promotion of their resilience.

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