



Research Article

**THE IMPACT OF PROFESSIONALISM ON COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE THROUGH ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE IN HOSPITALITY BUSINESSES**

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**Abstract**

Despite the crises deeply affecting the tourism industry, the number of hospitality businesses in Turkey increase every year, and the competition between them becomes fiercer. Identifying the factors, contributing to competitive advantages, is crucial for hospitality companies that wish to succeed, grow and be present in a competitive market. In this context, this study aims to examine the effect professionalization has on competitive advantage in hospitality businesses, mediated by organizational resilience. Having adopted a quantitative research method, the study utilized convenience sampling and questionnaires to collect data. Managers from the five-star hospitality businesses in Alanya and Manavgat provided the data for the study. In total, 414 questionnaires were collected for the analyses. According to the findings, acquired from the structural model, professionalization positively predicts organizational resilience and competitive power, while organizational resilience also does the same for competitive power. Furthermore, the relationship between professionalization and competitive power is fully mediated by organizational resilience. In general, the results of the study show that qualified managers and employees play key roles in acquiring competitive power by improving organizational resilience. The findings of the study present empirical outcomes that can be deemed guidelines for hospitality businesses to acquire and sustain competitive power in today's rapidly changing environment, fiercely competitive market and frequently surging crises.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Competition, professionalization, organizational resilience, competitive advantage, hospitality businesses

**Introduction**

Many companies today have to face crises and ambiguities with the effect of globalization. Such crises can be external such as the Great Depression, World Wars, and outbreaks. They can also have internal reasons such as the Enron scandal, and faulty production of General Motors and Toyota. The hospitality industry is severely impacted by crises and fluctuations as it has a major stake in the global economy. Among the most affected institutions are hospitality businesses as a result of crises and ambiguities in the industry. Contagious diseases such as COVID-10, SARS, MERS, Swine Flu, Avian Flu, and Ebola threaten the global economy and human life, leading to a destructive impact on hospitality companies (Üngüren and Arslan, 2022). Institutionalization (Argyris and Schön, 1978; Montes, Moreno and Morales, 2005) and organizational resilience levels (Kumbalı, 2018; McManus, et al., 2008) play critical roles for hospitality businesses to sustain their activities and ensure their competitive advantages during times of crises.

Institutionalization is an organization's possession of rules, standards, and procedures rather than persons, the generation of a structure that is per its organizational goals, the inclusion of its unique operational procedures and methods, the provision of job and duty definitions, a delegation of authority and responsibilities to experts, and thus, assumption of a differentiated identity than others. One of the elements of institutionalization is to ensure professionalization (Apaydın, 2008; Şanal, 2011; Kaçmaz, 2021; Yağcı, 2014). Professionalization is the distribution of tasks, authority, and responsibility to individuals with relevant expertise by specialists in the field of necessary work and transactions within an organization (Türkoğlu and Çizel, 2016). Professionalization aims to boost the productivity of the organization, improve the quality of provided services or products, and enhance the organization's competitive advantage, reputation, and reliability. In a study they

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conducted with the front office employees of hotels in the city of Seoul in Korea, Lee (2014) concluded that professionalization has an impact on service quality. The quality of human resources at an organization creates a significant impact on the organization's competitive edge (Apaydın, 2008; Ntwiga, Muchara and Kiriri, 2018; Tavşancı, 2009; Türk and Yıldız, 2015; Türkoğlu and Çizel, 2016).

Various studies point out that manager and leader behavior (Bell, 2002) and employees' knowledge, skills, and merits (Lengnick-Hall, Beck and Lengnick-Hall, 2011) affect organizational resilience. Thanks to professionals, organizations can sharpen their coping skills in the face of issues and ambiguities, respond well to potential challenges, and rapidly overcome setbacks. Organizations' ability to render their activities sustainable is linked with organizational resilience in the literature (Kumbalı, 2018; Lengnick-Hall, et. al, 2011; McManus, et. al., 2008). Organizational resilience allows organizations to perceive, understand and recognize potential threats in advance. Moreover, it provides the opportunity to acquire comprehensive information on the market itself in addition to customer behavior. This way, organizations regulate their activities and gain a competitive advantage over others (Kim et al. 2020; Lengnick-Hall, et al, 2011; Pratono, 2021; Sawalha, Anchor and Meaton, 2015; Sharma and Sharma, 2020; Sijia, Lingfeng and Yanling, 2021; Teece, 2007; Wang, Chen, and Zhang, 2022). Within the context of these statements, this study aims to determine the impact of professionalization on the competitive advantage of hospitality businesses as mediated by organizational resilience. The significance of the study lies in its potential guidance for hospitality businesses concerning overcoming times of recent crises and ambiguity with a competitive edge. Furthermore, there are very few studies on this topic in the literature.

### **Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses of the Study**

In the broadest sense, institutionalization is defined as an organization's management within the scope of a set of goals and targets and certain principles and values (Freitas and Guimaaes, 2007). Institutionalization refers to the adoption of a series of official rules, procedures, and practices, shaping how an organization interacts with its stakeholders, how it functions, and at which quality standards its work should be. Jepperson (1991) interprets institutionalization as the routinization of programs and rules. Intrinsic norms, rules, and procedures of an organization help to reduce ambiguity and make it easier for the organization to make plans and decisions. At the same time, standardization of processes and procedures may give way to efficiency and productivity. Selznick (1957) argues in their study that institutionalization is a process per se. It occurs within the organization depending on the time, indicating the individuals and groups comprising the organization and explicating the organization's ways to adapt to its environment. Following these processes, procedures, policies, and routines are established, becoming values for the organization. In addition, the author states that institutionalization plays a key role in the organization's fulfillment of its mission and goals (Gürol, 2011; Scott, 2014). Highly institutionalized organizations are expected to adapt to their environment first, then settle their organizational structure and eliminate conditions that do not provide any benefits to the individuals, comprising the organization, and the organization itself. According to Van de Ven (1993), institutionalization comes into question when values are set up in line with the organization's needs and the organization is approached as an organism that is in line with its surroundings.

Existing studies often consider the dimensions of formalization and professionalization of institutionalization. Formalization concerns the organization's defining of its structure, activities, and relationships, relating such activities to rules and procedures, and keeping written records of employees' tasks, duties, authority, and roles (Wallace, 1995). Adler and Borys (1996), on the other hand, refer to Weber's understanding of bureaucracy, describing formalization as the writing down of the rules and procedures of an organization to make up the best structure for it. Professionalization indicates that operations, which have to be carried out within the organization, are done so by professionals with the required knowledge, skills, and training (Erdirençelebi, 2012; Yazıcıoğlu and Koç, 2009). Professionalization aims to boost the levels of expertise and professionalism within the establishment, improve the quality of services or products, and enhance the organization's competitive advantage and reliability.

According to Porter, the doyen of strategic management, an organization's structure of human resources plays a key role in its acquisition of competitive edge (Ntwiga, et al., 2018). Professionalization can improve the levels of expertise, specialization, and knowledge among employees, generating a positive impact on organizations and possibly leading to a boost in performance and productivity. Naturally, organizations' acquisition of competitive power is closely linked with their level of professionalization (Argyris and Schön, 1978; Cockburn et al., 1998; Montes et al., 2005). Competitive power refers to organizations' protection of themselves against their competitors in the market or the sustaining of their competitive abilities (Bellendorf,

1993 cited in Drescher and Maurer, 1999: 164). Another definition claims that competitive power provides advantages in the market and in the face of competitors by creating better customer value (İraz, 2005). Definitions regarding competitive power are often approached within the scope of superiority over organizations' competitors (Cockburn et al. 1998).

There is a limited number of studies on the relationship between professionalization and competitive power. Türkoğlu and Çizel (2016) studied hospitality businesses in Antalya and found a positive relationship between competitive power and professionalization, which is a sub-dimension of institutionalization. Tavşancı (2009) studied organizations registered at the Istanbul Stock Exchange and investigated the relationship between institutionalization and competitive power. Consequently, they found a positive relationship between professionalization, which is a sub-dimension of institutionalization, and competitive power. Additionally, there are still a few studies that investigate the relationship between these two variables albeit indirectly. Apaydın (2008) studies the relationship between institutionalization and organizational performance, examining SMEs in different industries. In conclusion, they found that professionalization has an impact on functional performance and innovation, and fit performance. In another study, conducted with organized industry establishments in Sakarya, it was found that as organizations grow, professional work teams become more and more important (Türk and Yıldız, 2015). Within the context of these statements, the first hypothesis of the study is indicated below:

H<sub>1</sub>: Professionalization positively affects competitive advantage.

Organizational resilience has become an important topic, attracting the attention of researchers and organizations as a result of the recent issues and ambiguities that have become very common. Literature on organizational resilience shows that there are, overall, two main perspectives. The first one concerns the absorbing of the threat in the face of it and the ability to continue activities after the threat (Horne III and Orr, 1998; Kaçmaz, 2021; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011; Mallak, 1998). The second perspective on organizational resilience, on the other hand, refers to the organizations' abilities to develop new talents, adapt to newly emerging situations, and generate new opportunities in cases of threats (Kaçmaz, 2021). From this perspective, Vogus and Sutcliffe (2007) explains organizational resilience as an organization's sustaining of its activities under threats as well as its gaining of power following the elimination of the threat and of the ability to absorb all types of threats.

Lengnick-Hall et al. (2011) express that employees can improve organizational resilience once their levels of knowledge, talent, and merits reach the needed qualities. Professional employees are not only knowledgeable and talented in such cases, but they can also provide solutions in the face of issues and ambiguities (Wallace, 1995). Such talents of professionals are important in coping with the changes that occur frequently, especially in these times. Linked with these talents of professionals, the resilience of organizations can increase, and potential crises can be managed effectively. Bell (2002) states that manager behavior and leadership are listed at the top of the most important factors, impacting resilience in organizations. Accordingly, the predetermination to ensure organizational resilience, provision of necessary resources in cases of change, and activities to cope with change fall within the area of responsibility of managers and leaders.

There are only a few studies that directly investigate the relationship between professionalization and organizational resilience. Kaçmaz and Çevirgen (2021) conducted a study on hospitality businesses in Alanya, where they determined a positive relationship between professionalization and organizational resilience. Tibay et al. (2018), on the other hand, studied accommodation businesses in New Zealand and concluded that organizations' resilience features rely on several variables such as leadership and fundamental skills of employees. In another study conducted on service businesses in Dubai, transformational leadership was found to have a positive impact on organizational resilience (Odeh et al., 2021). Finally, another study conducted with Vietnamese hospitality businesses found that organizations carried out human resources practices to improve organizational resilience during COVID-19 (Su et al., 2021). Within the context of these findings, the second hypothesis of the study is set up as below:

H<sub>2</sub>: Professionalization positively affects organizational resilience.

Although organizational resilience is linked with organizations' maintenance of their activities and their adaptation to the changing environment in the literature, its effects are not limited to them. A review of the existing literature on organizational resilience shows that it provides a competitive edge to organizations, allowing them to guarantee that they can sustain their activities (Kim et al. 2020; Lengnick-Hall, et al, 2011; Wang et al., 2022). The competitive edge organizational resilience brings to organizations can manifest in

different forms. First of all, organizational resilience helps organizations accept the issues they experience, organize all of their resources in planned ways and restructure them. This allows new organizational skills to improve when organizations have to cope with the competitive environment in changing settings (Sawalha, et al., 2015; Sijia et al, 2021; Teece, 2007). Secondly, organizational resilience helps organizations to understand the event as well as its impact on the organization. This ensures that organizations can rapidly overcome problems and can gain a competitive advantage (Lee, Vargo and Seville, 2013; Wang et al., 2022). Third, organizations would not only be estimating changes in customer demand thanks to organizational resilience, but they can also follow up on the innovative modifications occurring in the industry as they would also be knowledgeable about the directions of the market. In this case, it brings about a competitive edge to organizations (Sharma and Sharma, 2020; Pratono, 2021; Wang et al., 2022).

Concerning the statements above, organizational resilience is estimated to provide a competitive advantage to organizations. An examination of the studies on the relationship between organizational resilience and competitive power yields very few. In a study, conducted in a cement company in Iran, organizational resilience was found to positively predict competitive power (Marzieh and Mahbobeh, 2017). In another study conducted by Pratono (2021) in Indonesia and Wang et al. (2022) in China, organizational resilience was found to help in organizations' acquisition of competitive power. On the other hand, a study in Northern India with information technology companies showed that team resilience provides a competitive edge, yielding an effect that mediates the relationship between team resilience and organizational productivity (Sharma and Sharma, 2020). In this context, the third hypothesis of the study is set up as below:

H<sub>3</sub>: Organizational resilience has a significant effect on competitive advantage.

Professionalization is a key factor for organizations in gaining a competitive advantage. It has been revealed in several studies that organizations' investment and developmental practices for human capital provide competitive advantages (Türkoğlu and Çizel, 2016; Davis, 2017; Ntwiga, et al., 2018). In addition, professionalization boosts employees' capabilities of coping with problems and ambiguities, positively affecting organizational resilience. This helps organizations to respond well to potential difficulties and quickly overcome possible challenges. Furthermore, professionalization leads to the development of standards and best practices across the industry, helping organizations to be better prepared for and manage risks (Bell, 2002; Lengnick-Hall, et al, 2011).

Organizational resilience to which professionalization contributes is an element that warrants the organization's activities. Organizational resilience helps organizations to preconceive, understand and recognize issues. This way, organizations can rearrange their activities in line with the changing environment and adopt any precautions necessary for potential problems. Moreover, thanks to organizational resilience, organizations do not only acquire information about customers but also about the whole market. With all of these means, organizations can acquire an edge against their competitors (Kim et al. 2020; Lengnick-Hall et al, 2011; Pratono, 2021; Sawalha et al., 2015; Sharma and Sharma, 2020; Sijia et al., 2021; Teece, 2007; Wang et al., 2022).

Within the context of the explanations above, it is predicted that professionalization may affect competitive advantage, mediated by organizational resilience. The literature review does not yield any studies that directly examine the relationship between these three concepts. Still, studies investigating the relationship between professionalization and organizational resilience (Kaçmaz and Çevirgen, 2021; Odeh, et al., 2021; Su et al., 2021; Tibay, et al, 2018), professionalization and competitive advantage (Apaydın, 2008; Tavşancı, 2009; Türk and Yıldız, 2015; Türkoğlu and Çizel, 2016) and organizational resilience and competitive advantage (Marzieh and Mahbobeh, 2017; Pratono, 2021; Sharma and Sharma, 2020; Wang et al., 2022) appear to support such a prediction. In this context, the fourth hypothesis of the study is set up as below:

H<sub>4</sub>: Professionalization has a significant effect on competitive advantage, mediated by organizational resilience.

## **Methodology**

### **Study Design and Setting**

Defined within the scope of the research model, the conceptual model (Figure 1) is attempted to be tested with empirical findings, which is why a quantitative research approach is adopted. Questionnaires were used to collect data for this cross-sectional research study. The sampling method for the study is convenience sampling from among non-probability sampling methods due to temporal and cost-related limitations. Top executives

(general managers and vice general managers), and department managers (department manager, assistants, and chiefs) participated in the study from five different hospitality businesses in the Alanya and Manavgat regions of Antalya province. Data were collected from 38 hotels with practical approvals and 414 managers volunteered to participate. Data were collected from July 2022 to October 2022. This research was approved by KTO Karatay University Human Research Ethics Committee with the decision dated 26/05/2022 and numbered 2022.05.33. In total, 26% of the respondents were female (n = 109), and 74% were male (n = 305). Moreover, 58.5% of the respondents were department chiefs, 34.8% were department managers, and 6.8% were general managers/vice general managers. Concerning education, 51.9% hold bachelor's degrees and associate degrees (n = 215), 36% hold high school diplomas (n = 149), 9.4% are primary school graduates (n=39) and 2.7% have master's degrees (n = 11). Within the scope of the study, no primary school graduates were determined to work as a general manager/vice general manager, or department manager. Also, 29.5% of the managers and chiefs have reported having worked for the organization for 1-3 years, 28.3% for 4-6 years, 19.1% for 7-9 years, and 10.4% for a decade and more. Finally, the ratio of the respondents, who have been working at their current organization for more than six months and less than a year, was determined to be 12.8%.

### **Instrument**

The study utilized questionnaires to act as a quantitative research method. The first page of the questionnaire has a disclosure statement, declaring the purpose of the study, assuring the respondents that acquired data will not be shared with any third parties, and stating that participation in the study is voluntary. The independent variable of the study, professionalization, was measured with the eight propositions in the institutionalization scale, developed by Kaçmaz and Çevirgen (2021), under the dimension of professionalization. The second variable in the scale has to do with a competitive advantage, which is the dependent variable. The scale for competitive advantage is taken from the study of Fathi et al. (2021), comprising eight propositions. The mediating variable of the study, which is the scale for organizational resilience, sets up the third section of the questionnaire. Organizational resilience was measured with the thirteen-item organizational resilience scale, developed by Orchiston, Prayag and Brown (2016). Propositions in all of the three scales were measured with a 5-item Likert scale (1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree). The final part of the questionnaire hosts a personal information form to identify the demographics of the respondents such as age, gender, educational status, and duration of work.

### **Analysis**

First of all, the data set was controlled for missing values. Consequently, the mean imputation method, recommended by Hair et al. (2014) was used to impute mean values for series. To test the presence of outliers, Mahalanobis' distance was analyzed. As a result, no outliers were found. To test the normal distribution of data, skewness, and kurtosis values were examined. Skewness values were found to be between 0.39 and -0.57 and kurtosis values were found to be between 0,62, and -0,67. This data shows the normal distribution in the data set since acquired values are between -2 and +2 (Kline, 2011). Furthermore, descriptive analyses to determine the characteristics of respondents were used within the scope of the study. From this perspective, acquired data were analyzed with frequency and percentage distributions. Analyses concerning the theoretical model of the study were carried out in two phases as recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). In the first phase, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to test the measurement model, and findings regarding the reliability and validity of the measurement were acquired. In the second phase, structural relations between latent structures were examined and the hypothesis of the study was tested. The research model, established to test confirmatory factor analyses and hypotheses, was analyzed with AMOS 24 (IBM, Armonk, NY, US).

### **Results**

#### **Findings on the Measurement Model**

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to determine the goodness of fit values of the research model, the results of which are presented in Table 1. The measurement model was then tested with the maximum likelihood method. First, scale items were examined by investigating standardized factor loads to see if they are reliable in reflecting the latent variable. The results in Table 1 were acquired after two items with standardized factor load values below 0.50 were eliminated from organizational resilience dimension. As can be viewed in Figure 2, factor loads change between 0.817 and 0.609 for professionalization scale; between 0.773 and 0.629 for organizational resilience; and between 0.749 and 0.672 for competitive advantage. All

factor loads for scale items were found to be above 0.50 and all of them were loaded on the latent variable in a statistically significant way ( $p < 0.01$ ). The measurement model has proven to be acceptable (Schermele-Engel et al., 2003) because the goodness of fit values were found to be within acceptable limits [ $\chi^2$  (296,  $n = 414$ ) = 510,006;  $\chi^2/df = 1,1723$ ; RMSEA = .042; IFI = .955; TLI = .950; CFI = .955]. In addition to the goodness of fit index values for the measurement model, structural validity must be tested, which is why data concerning convergent and discriminant validity are displayed in Table 2. Accordingly, AVE values of the variables are above 0.50 and CR variables are above 0.70, while CR values are greater than AVE values, indicating convergent validity (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion was considered in discriminant validity. Accordingly, results in Table 2 show that the square root of the AVE value of each value is greater than the correlation coefficient between variables, indicating that discriminant validity is ensured between all the constructs in the measurement model. Reliability of the scales were evaluated with Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) internal consistency coefficients. All Cronbach's alpha values concerning scales were found to be above 0.70, revealing that scales achieved internal consistency (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

According to the results of the correlation analysis in Table, there are statistically significant and positively directed relationships between professionalism and organizational resilience ( $r = 0.484$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and competitive advantage ( $r = 0.237$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Also, a positive relationship was determined between organizational resilience and competitive advantage ( $r = 0.411$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). To identify whether there is an issue concerning common method variance, Harman's single factor test was applied. According to the test results, the first factor accounts for 32,2% of the variance, which is below 50% that is the threshold. According to this result, common method variance risk is not encountered in the study.

**Table 1. Results of Measurement Model**

| Items  |   | Dimension                 | M    | SD   | Estimate | t-value   |
|--------|---|---------------------------|------|------|----------|-----------|
| PROF 1 | → | Professionalization       | 3.24 | 0.87 | 0.782    | Fixed     |
| PROF 2 | → | Professionalization       | 3.15 | 0.98 | 0.609    | 12.241*** |
| PROF 3 | → | Professionalization       | 3.17 | 0.79 | 0.646    | 13.578*** |
| PROF 4 | → | Professionalization       | 3.17 | 0.87 | 0.677    | 13.997*** |
| PROF 5 | → | Professionalization       | 3.13 | 0.71 | 0.673    | 14.103*** |
| PROF 6 | → | Professionalization       | 3.02 | 0.82 | 0.744    | 15.706*** |
| PROF 7 | → | Professionalization       | 3.09 | 0.93 | 0.817    | 17.745*** |
| PROF 8 | → | Professionalization       | 3.15 | 0.83 | 0.769    | 16.382*** |
| ORGRES | → | Organizational Resilience | 3.07 | 0.79 | 0.769    | Fixed     |
| ORGRES | → | Organizational Resilience | 3.17 | 0.71 | 0.670    | 11.635*** |
| ORGRES | → | Organizational Resilience | 3.14 | 0.76 | 0.721    | 12.737*** |
| ORGRES | → | Organizational Resilience | 3.30 | 0.71 | 0.659    | 11.550*** |
| ORGRES | → | Organizational Resilience | 3.08 | 0.91 | 0.674    | 11.783*** |
| ORGRES | → | Organizational Resilience | 3.06 | 0.88 | 0.629    | 10.974*** |
| ORGRES | → | Organizational Resilience | 3.05 | 0.81 | 0.681    | 12.006*** |
| ORGRES | → | Organizational Resilience | 3.00 | 0.82 | 0.751    | 13.192*** |
| ORGRES | → | Organizational Resilience | 3.12 | 0.81 | 0.749    | 13.172*** |
| ORGRES | → | Organizational Resilience | 2.88 | 0.94 | 0.773    | 13.617*** |
| ORGRES | → | Organizational Resilience | 2.92 | 0.74 | 0.696    | 12.788*** |
| COMADV | → | Competitive Advantage     | 2.92 | 0.74 | 0.672    | Fixed     |
| COMADV | → | Competitive Advantage     | 3.33 | 0.86 | 0.749    | 12.271*** |
| COMADV | → | Competitive Advantage     | 3.30 | 0.75 | 0.707    | 12.267*** |
| COMADV | → | Competitive Advantage     | 3.38 | 0.87 | 0.727    | 12.572*** |
| COMADV | → | Competitive Advantage     | 3.34 | 0.73 | 0.683    | 12.122*** |
| COMADV | → | Competitive Advantage     | 3.40 | 0.83 | 0.685    | 12.052*** |
| COMADV | → | Competitive Advantage     | 3.33 | 0.76 | 0.739    | 12.774*** |
| COMADV | → | Competitive Advantage     | 3.30 | 0.72 | 0.744    | 13.010*** |

PROF: Professionalization, ORGRES: Organizational Resilience, COMADV: Competitive advantage, \*\*\* < .001

**Table 2. Convergent and Discriminant Validity**

|     | Mean | SE   | PROF    | ORGRES  | COMADV | $\alpha$ | AVE   | CR    |
|-----|------|------|---------|---------|--------|----------|-------|-------|
| PRO | 3.14 | 0.77 | [0.72]  |         |        | 0.893    | 0.515 | 0.893 |
| DAY | 3.07 | 0.59 | 0.484** | [0.71]  |        | 0.915    | 0.501 | 0.916 |
| REK | 3.33 | 0.73 | 0.237** | 0.411** | [0.71] | 0.894    | 0.509 | 0.892 |

PROF: Professionalization, ORGRES: Organizational Resilience, COMADV: Competitive Advantage,  $\alpha$ : Cronbach Alfa, AVE= Average Variance Extracted, Values in square brackets [] are the square root values of AVE, \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

**Findings regarding the hypothesis testing**

Following the validation of the measurement model, hypotheses were tested over the structural value with latent variables. Results of the analysis concerning hypothesis testing are presented in Table 3. First,  $H_1$  (PROF  $\rightarrow$  COMADV) was tested with the structural model with latent variable, in which professionalization is an exogenous variable and competitive power is an endogenous variable. According to the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) results, professionalization predicts competitive power in a positive way ( $\beta = 0.237$ ,  $t = 4.213$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This result supports hypothesis  $H_1$ .

**Table 3. Result of Structural Model**

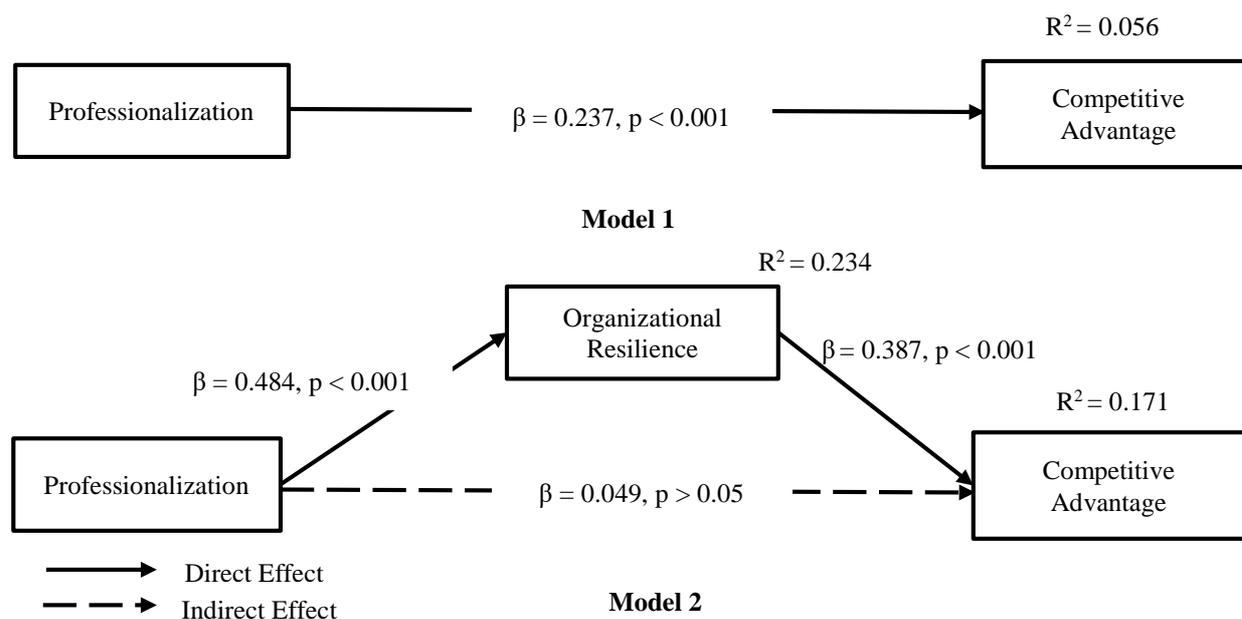
| Hypothesis | Relation  | $\beta$ | SE    | t     | p           | $\Delta R^2$ |
|------------|---|---------|-------|-------|-------------|--------------|
| Model 1    | Professionalization $\rightarrow$ Competitive Advantage | 0.237   | 0.042 | 4.213 | $p < 0.001$ | 0.056        |
|            | Professionalization $\rightarrow$ Resilience            | 0.484   | 0.043 | 8.306 | $p < 0.001$ | 0.234        |
| Model 2    | Resilience $\rightarrow$ Competitive Advantage          | 0.387   | 0.068 | 5.694 | $p < 0.001$ |              |
|            | Professionalization $\rightarrow$ Competitive Advantage | 0.049   | 0.045 | 0.820 | $p > 0.05$  | 0.171        |

To test other hypotheses of the research study, another model was established, in which organizational resilience is the mediating variable. Goodness-of-fit indexes, acquired with the path analysis, show that the model fits with the data. Professionalization, alongside organizational resilience, explains 17% of the variance on competitive advantage. Consequently, professionalism is found to predict organizational resilience (PROF  $\rightarrow$  ORGRES) positively ( $\beta = 0.484$ ,  $t = 8.306$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Accordingly, hypothesis  $H_2$  is supported.

**Table 4. Results of Mediation Analysis**

| Relation                                       | Indirect Effect |       |       | Relation              | Direct effect |            | Total effect |             |
|--|-----------------|-------|-------|-----------------------|---------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
|  | $\beta$         | LLCI  | ULCI  |                       | $\beta$       | p          | $\beta$      | p           |
| PROF $\rightarrow$ ORGRES $\rightarrow$ COMADV | 0.188           | 0.122 | 0.267 | PRO $\rightarrow$ REK | 0.049         | $p > 0.05$ | 0.237        | $p < 0.001$ |

The mediating variable, organizational resilience was also determined to have a significant and positive effect ( $\beta = 0.387$ ,  $t = 5.694$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) on competitive advantage (ORGRES  $\rightarrow$  COMADV). In this context, hypothesis  $H_3$  was supported. Still, the inclusion of organizational resilience into the model as a mediating variable appears to eliminate the significant effect professionalization has on competitive advantage ( $\beta = 0.049$ ,  $t = 0.820$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). A path analysis based on bootstrap method was also conducted to test whether organizational resilience has a mediating role in the relationship between professionalization and competitive advantage as shown in Table 4. The 5000 resampling option was selected with a 95% confidence interval in the bootstrap analysis. According to the results of the bootstrap analysis, the direct effect professionalization has on competitive advantage on via organizational resilience (PROF  $\rightarrow$  ORGRES  $\rightarrow$  COMADV) is found to be significant [ $\beta = 0.188$ , %95 CI (0.122;0.267)]. These results show that organizational resilience plays a mediating role in the relationship between professionalization and competitive advantage. This finding supports hypothesis  $H_4$ .

**Figure. 2. Mediating Role of Organizational Resilience in the Relationship of Professionalization and Competitive Advantage**

## Conclusion

Businesses today can face several crises and they can affect their existing positions in the market and can negatively affect their competitive power. Thus, businesses must be able to manage crises. The most important element for businesses to be able to cope with crises is human resources. The merits, talents, and level of knowledge of human resources help businesses sustain their activities and adapt to their changing environments. In addition, this potential also allows them to improve their organizational resilience and develop various capabilities in the face of potential crises, leading them to acquire protective and developmental talents concerning their existing positions and competitive powers. In line with this information, this study approaches the relationship between professionalization and competitive power within the context of organizational resilience. The following paragraphs reveal the important inferences we made from the results of the study.

Consequent to the analyses carried out in line with the hypotheses of the study, professionalization was, first and foremost, found to positively predict competitive power. This finding can be interpreted as organizations' potential to boost their competitive powers once they hire employees, who are immensely knowledgeable about the market and capable of the position. At the same time, it is assumed that organizations can improve their performance and productivity with professionalization, leading to current employees' levels of specialization, expertise, and knowledge (Argyris and Schön, 1978; Cockburn et al., 1998; Montes et al., 2005), which would in turn positively impact competitive power too. This is because the structure of human resources at companies plays a key role in ensuring competitive power (Ntwiga et al., 2018). Moreover, a review of existing studies shows that the findings of studies such as the one Türkoğlu and Çizel (2016) conducted on hospitality organizations and Tavşancı (2009) on organizations registered at the Istanbul Stock Exchange are following those of this study. Overall, all these findings reveal that when organizations work with professionals, they can improve their competitive powers.

Secondly, professionalization positively affects organizational resilience. This finding indicates that professionalization can have a positive impact on the organization's resilience by increasing the workforce's levels of skills and expertise. Such impact can help organizations to better respond to potential crises and quickly adapt to the changing environment. Furthermore, developing best practices and standards across the sector is possible with professionalization. This way, organizations can be better prepared for crises and acquire capabilities to manage crises. In general, professionalization can be viewed as a positive force for organizational resilience. However, businesses need to ensure the balance between developing expertise and sustaining a culture of flexibility and adaptability. A review of the existing studies shows that the findings of this study are parallel with those of Kaçmaz and Çevirgen (2021), who studied hospitality businesses in

Alanya. In addition, studies that examine the links between leadership, human resources practices, and organizational resilience in service businesses in New Zealand (Tibay et al., 2018), Vietnam (Su et al., 2021), and Dubai (Odeh, et. al, 2021) yield results that are similar to this study, albeit indirectly. Moreover, many of the studies, the research findings of which correspond with this study, were conducted during the pandemic, which is a noteworthy point as well. In summary, all these findings indicate that when businesses work with professionals, especially during times of crisis, their resilience can improve.

The third finding acquired within the scope of this study is that organizational resilience positively predicts competitive power. Organizational resilience can be interpreted as an organization's skills to forecast potential crises, respond in times of crises, and adapt to the changing environment, hence overcoming the crisis. Considering the rapidly changing environment of today, existing competitive markets and frequently occurring crises, organizational resilience has become an important factor for organizations to acquire and sustain their competitive power. Moreover, organizational resilience can affect competitive power in more ways than one. For example, organizations, thanks to organizational resilience, can reduce their impact because they would rearrange their operations in the event of any potential crises. Another effect is that organizational resilience allows organizations to quickly overcome a crisis. Organizations that can respond to crises in rapid and effective ways and overcome challenges quickly can also minimize the times during which they can be affected by crises. In addition, organizational resilience provides organizations with various skills such as being open to novelties, adapting to the changing environment, and identifying new opportunities, granting them the opportunity to have a large share of the market. In short, organizations are not affected by potential crises or can minimize such effects thanks to their organizational resilience levels. This might affect organizations' positions and customer satisfaction levels, which is why organizational resilience can improve their market shares and revenues. Studies on this subject have been conducted in Iran (Marzieh and Mahbobeh, 2017), Indonesia (Pratono, 2021) and China (Wang, et. al., 2022) across different sectors, relaying similar conclusions to those in this study. In conclusion, organizational resilience appears to be a key factor in increasing competitive power.

Finally, organizational resilience was found to play a mediating role in the relationship between professionalization and competitive power. The most significant element organizations can possess in the face of crises today is human resources. Still, it is thought that when levels of merit, talent, and knowledge of human resources are above a certain point, it can impact organizational resilience, which will boost the organization's competitive power under all circumstances, including times of crisis. A review of the existing studies on this topic did not yield any that directly examines the relationship between these three variables. Nonetheless, findings concerning variables and those in the literature appear to support the findings of this study. In summary, it can be argued that when organizations work with professionals and carry out human resources practices to develop employees, they can improve their resilience in the face of crises, which would, in turn, positively affect their competitive power.

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