Research Articles

Resilience in Human Resource Management: Organizational Adaptation Strategies in the Tourism Industry during Times of Uncertainty and Crisis

Retno Widowati [1]*, Damdam Damiyana [2]

[1] Politeknik LP3I Jakarta, Indonesia ; Email : retnowidowati15@gmail.com
[2] Politeknik LP3I Jakarta, Indonesia ; Email : dmyana@gmail.com
* Corresponding Author: Retno Widowati

Abstract: Organizational resilience has become a strategic imperative for tourism firms operating in increasingly volatile and uncertain environments. This study explores how strategic human resource management (SHRM) practices specifically HR flexibility, leadership agility, and strategic workforce planning contribute to enhancing organizational resilience. The study introduces an integrative framework in which employee engagement acts as a mediating variable, and organizational culture functions as a moderator. A qualitative exploratory design was employed through a structured literature review of 35 peer reviewed articles published between 2020 and 2024. Thematic content analysis, supported by NVivo 14 software, identified patterns and relationships among variables. Results indicate that HR flexibility supports operational adaptability, leadership agility enhances strategic responsiveness, and workforce planning promotes long term preparedness. Furthermore, employee engagement strengthens the link between HR strategies and resilience outcomes, while organizational culture shapes the effectiveness of these strategies. The findings reinforce the relevance of the dynamic capabilities framework and offer theoretical and practical insights for designing resilient HR systems in the tourism sector.

1. Introduction

Organizational resilience has emerged as a critical capability for firms operating in volatile and uncertain environments, especially within the tourism industry which is highly sensitive to global disruptions [1]. Defined as the organization's ability to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and adapt to incremental change and sudden disruptions, resilience is no longer seen as merely reactive but as a proactive organizational competency [2]. In the tourism sector, organizational resilience plays a pivotal role in ensuring business continuity, employee well being, and cus-tomer retention in the face of crises such as pandemics, political instability, or environmental disasters [3]. Studies have emphasized that resilient organizations are better equipped to mitigate risks, capitalize on opportunities during crises, and ensure long term sustainability [4]. As such, understanding the determinants of organizational resilience has become an urgent academic and practical concern.

This urgency is particularly pronounced in the tourism industry, which was one of the most affected sectors during the COVID 19 pandemic, resulting in global travel restrictions, massive layoffs, and organizational closures [5]. Despite these challenges, some organizations demonstrated remarkable adaptive capacity, driven by innovative human resource practices

and strategic leadership responses. These differences underscore the need to explore how internal organizational strategies, particularly within HRM, contribute to resilience under extreme uncertainty [6]. The industry's high dependence on human capital further highlights the ne-cessity to examine how resilience can be cultivated not just at the individual level, but at the organizational level through targeted management interventions [7]. This research is therefore timely and relevant in addressing a critical gap in the literature: how human resource strategies shape organizational resilience during crises in tourism.

Strategic human resource management (SHRM) has been widely recognized as a crucial factor in building organizational resilience, especially when firms face rapid environmental changes [8]. Practices such as talent development, workforce flexibility, employee empow-erment, and crisis training are part of a strategic HRM framework that fosters adaptability and robustness [9]. SHRM contributes to resilience by aligning human capital with the organization's adaptive goals and facilitating rapid redeployment of skills when needed [10]. In crisis settings, organizations that integrate SHRM into their core strategy are more capable of mobilizing internal resources efficiently, minimizing disruptions, and sustaining performance [11]. Therefore, this study investigates how the application of strategic HRM practices in tourism enhances organizational resilience.

Another key contributor to organizational resilience is leadership adaptability the ability of leaders to modify their strategies and behaviors in response to changing circumstances [12]. Adaptive leaders demonstrate cognitive flexibility, emotional regulation, and situational awareness, all of which are essential during uncertain periods [13]. In the tourism industry, adaptable leadership can foster trust, maintain team cohesion, and guide organizational transformation during times of disruption [14]. Empirical evidence shows that leaders who proactively embrace change and involve employees in decision making processes contribute significantly to organizational resilience [15]. This study thus examines how leadership adaptability functions as a driver of resilience in tourism organizations affected by crisis.

Employee engagement also plays a fundamental role in enhancing organizational resilience, as engaged employees are more likely to exhibit proactive behavior, psychological commitment, and resilience at the individual level [16]. High engagement is associated with greater job sat-isfaction, reduced turnover intentions, and higher performance during periods of instability [17]. In the tourism context, where emotional labor and service orientation are critical, engaged employees are instrumental in maintaining service quality and ensuring business continuity during crises [18]. Therefore, understanding how employee engagement influences resilience can offer practical insights for HRM strategies aiming to bolster organizational stability in uncertain times.

Organizational learning serves as a mediating mechanism through which HRM practices, leadership adaptability, and employee engagement contribute to resilience [19]. It enables

firms to absorb lessons from past crises, refine operational procedures, and build institutional memory that enhances future preparedness [20]. Learning organizations not only recover faster from disruptions but also transform through innovation and knowledge sharing [21]. This mediating role is especially pertinent in tourism, where continuous learning is needed to navigate evolving customer expectations and regulatory environments [22]. As such, this study includes organizational learning as a pathway linking internal strategic practices to resilience outcomes.

Environmental uncertainty acts as a moderating variable that can either amplify or constrain the effectiveness of internal adaptation strategies [23]. In highly uncertain environments, such as during pandemics or geopolitical crises, the variability and unpredictability of external conditions challenge the implementation of HRM practices and leadership responses [24]. However, under these conditions, the need for resilience becomes even more critical, and the role of internal strategies more pronounced [25]. This study explores whether and how en-vironmental uncertainty moderates the relationship between internal organizational strategies and resilience in tourism firms.

In conclusion, this study aims to investigate how strategic HRM practices, leadership adaptability, and employee engagement contribute to organizational resilience in the tourism sector, with organizational learning as a mediating variable and environmental uncertainty as a moderating factor. Theoretically, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on organizational resilience by integrating multiple internal and external variables into a cohesive framework. Empirically, the study offers practical insights for tourism organizations seeking to design adaptive HRM strategies and leadership development programs that enhance resilience in the face of crisis and uncertainty.

Although the concept of organizational resilience has gained substantial academic attention, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, most existing studies in the tourism sector have primarily focused on external pressures such as market volatility, government policies, and macroeconomic shocks as the main triggers for resilience building [1], [2]. Few studies have systematically examined the internal organizational mechanisms that underpin resilience, such as strategic human resource management (SHRM), leadership adaptability, and employee engagement [3], [4]. Moreover, there is a lack of integrative frameworks that position organizational learning as a mediating mechanism between these internal strategies and organizational resilience [5], [6]. While prior research has explored the relationship between SHRM and or-ganizational outcomes, the specific pathways through which SHRM enhances resilience par-ticularly through learning processes remain underexplored in tourism contexts, which are highly labor intensive and prone to crisis [7]. Similarly, although some literature has highlighted the importance of leadership adaptability, few empirical studies have addressed

how adaptive leadership behaviors interact with HR practices and employee engagement to foster a resilient organizational culture in tourism enterprises [8].

Furthermore, current scholarship rarely considers environmental uncertainty as a moderating variable that could either enhance or inhibit the effectiveness of internal strategies in promoting resilience [9], [10]. The tourism industry, given its dependency on geopolitical stability, health regulations, and cross border mobility, is particularly susceptible to such external uncertainties. However, most studies treat environmental conditions as background noise rather than as dynamic factors influencing strategic outcomes [11]. In addition, there is a tendency in existing research to treat SHRM, leadership, and employee engagement in isolation, rather than examining their combined effect within an integrated resilience framework [12]. Few models exist that address how these factors, collectively, can be aligned through organizational learning to reinforce long term resilience and adaptability [13]. Also lacking is a clear understanding of how these internal drivers function under varying degrees of environmental uncertainty a factor especially relevant in today's volatile global tourism landscape [14], [15]. Thus, a comprehensive model that incorporates SHRM, leadership adaptability, employee engagement, organizational learning, and environmental uncertainty remains a missing piece in the literature. This study offers a novel contribution by proposing and empirically testing an integrative framework that connects strategic human resource management, leadership adaptability, and employee en-gagement to organizational resilience, with organizational learning as a mediating variable and environmental uncertainty as a moderator. This multi dimensional model is rare in tourism resilience literature and provides both theoretical advancement and practical insights into how internal organizational strategies can be systematically aligned to build resilience in the face of crisis and disruption.

2. Literature Review

The concept of organizational resilience has garnered increasing attention in recent years, particularly within the tourism industry, which is highly susceptible to external disruptions such as pandemics, natural disasters, and political crises. As resilience becomes a strategic imperative, there is a growing need to understand how internal organizational factors contribute to a firm's ability to anticipate, absorb, and adapt to unexpected changes. Previous research has largely focused on external drivers or post crisis recovery, yet less attention has been paid to the internal mechanisms that proactively build resilience capacity. This literature review explores five key constructs Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), Leadership Adaptability, Em-ployee Engagement, Organizational Learning, and Environmental Uncertainty each of which plays a critical role in shaping organizational resilience. The following sections review the current state of knowledge on each construct

and identify gaps that inform the development of an integrative resilience framework for tourism organizations.

2.1. SHRM and Resilience

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) plays a fundamental role in enhancing organizational resilience, particularly in highly dynamic sectors like tourism. SHRM refers to the alignment of human capital strategies with the broader goals of the organization, emphasizing long term workforce planning, capability building, and adaptability [1]. In the context of crisis response, SHRM practices such as talent development, workforce flexibility, and employee empowerment are recognized for their capacity to improve organizational preparedness and responsiveness [2]. Several studies highlight that when HRM is integrated into strategic planning, organizations are more likely to withstand shocks and recover effectively [3], [4]. In tourism, where service delivery heavily depends on human resources, the strategic deployment and development of personnel become even more critical for maintaining business continuity during disruptions [5].

Despite the acknowledged importance of SHRM, existing literature lacks a comprehensive understanding of how SHRM practices directly contribute to resilience outcomes. Most research tends to address individual HR practices in isolation, without analyzing how they interact as part of a strategic framework that fosters organizational learning and adaptability [6]. Furthermore, few studies have empirically examined SHRM in tourism firms during crisis conditions, limiting insights into how HR strategies can be operationalized under extreme uncertainty [7]. There is also a noticeable gap in identifying mediating mechanisms such as organizational learning that may explain how SHRM enhances resilience over time [8]. Given the tourism sector's vulnerability to external shocks and its dependence on human capital, more nuanced research is needed to explore how strategic HRM systems can be designed not only for efficiency but also for resilience and long term sustainability [9].

2.2 Leadership Adaptability

Leadership adaptability is increasingly recognized as a core element of organizational resilience, especially in high uncertainty environments like tourism. Adaptive leaders are those who can adjust their behaviors, decision making approaches, and communication styles to respond effectively to changing circumstances [1]. During crises, such leaders foster trust, maintain morale, and create stability, enabling organizations to navigate uncertainty with confidence [2]. In the tourism sector, where frontline employees and operational structures are directly affected by external disruptions, adaptable leadership can guide rapid reconfiguration of strategies and workforce coordination [3]. Leaders who embrace flexibility and engage employees in shared problem solving contribute not only to operational recovery but also to long term transformation [4].

However, empirical studies examining leadership adaptability in the context of organizational resilience remain limited. Most research treats leadership traits in isolation, without connecting them to strategic processes or employee dynamics [5]. In tourism, particularly within small and medium enterprises (SMEs), leadership roles are often informal, making adaptability both a necessity and a challenge [6]. Furthermore, the interaction between adaptive leadership and other resilience building mechanisms, such as SHRM or organizational learning, is not well explored [7]. There is a need for deeper investigation into how leadership adaptability interacts with internal strategies and moderates the impact of environmental shocks on performance and continuity [8].

2.3 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a critical internal factor that influences an organization's ability to withstand and recover from crises. Engaged employees are emotionally committed to their work and the organization, which enhances their resilience, motivation, and proactive behavior during uncertain times [1]. In the tourism sector, where frontline service delivery is crucial, engaged employees help maintain service quality, customer satisfaction, and operational continuity even in crisis scenarios [2]. Research has shown that engagement positively correlates with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and lower turnover intention, all of which are essential for organizational stability and recovery [3]. Moreover, during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, engaged tourism employees have demonstrated greater willingness to adapt, support organizational change, and remain productive under pressure [4].

Despite its significance, the role of employee engagement in fostering organizational resilience has not been widely studied in tourism contexts. Existing literature often focuses on engagement as an outcome variable, rather than a driver of strategic resilience [5]. There is also limited research connecting engagement with broader organizational systems such as SHRM, leadership, or organizational learning [6]. Furthermore, the mechanisms through which engagement contributes to resilience such as enhanced communication, collaboration, or psychological capital remain underexplored [7]. Given the human centric nature of tourism, future research should investigate how engagement can be cultivated strategically and how it interacts with other resilience enhancing variables during times of crisis [8].

2.4 Organizational Learning

Organizational learning is the process through which organizations acquire, interpret, and apply knowledge to improve decision making, adapt to change, and enhance future preparedness [1]. In resilience literature, learning is increasingly viewed as a central mechanism that allows firms not only to recover from disruptions but also to transform and evolve [2]. Within tourism, organizational learning becomes especially critical due to the industry's exposure to unpredictable global events such as pandemics, natural disasters, and regulatory

shifts [3]. Learning oriented tourism firms are better equipped to redesign their service processes, innovate business models, and build institutional memory that supports long term survival and adaptability [4]. Moreover, learning from past crises strengthens internal systems, reduces vulnerability, and improves coordination across departments [5].

Despite its relevance, few studies empirically examine organizational learning as a mediating variable linking internal strategic factors such as SHRM, leadership adaptability, and employee engagement with organizational resilience [6]. Much of the current literature treats learning as a general capability, without specifying how it functions within resilience-building frameworks, especially in tourism SMEs [7]. In addition, the interaction between learning and external challenges, such as environmental uncertainty, is rarely addressed [8]. There is a growing need for models that clarify the pathways through which learning translates internal strategies into resilient outcomes. Such models would contribute significantly to both theory and practice by revealing how tourism firms can institutionalize learning to navigate future crises more effectively [9].

2.5 Environmental Uncertainty

Environmental uncertainty refers to the degree of unpredictability and instability in an organization's external environment, including political, economic, social, technological, and health related factors [1]. In the tourism industry, environmental uncertainty is particularly acute due to global crises such as pandemics, natural disasters, political conflicts, and sudden changes in international travel regulations [2]. High levels of uncertainty create challenges in forecasting demand, planning operations, and maintaining service quality [3]. As a result, the ability of an organization to remain resilient under such conditions depends not only on its internal resources but also on how these resources respond to the volatility of the external environment [4]. Organizations operating in uncertain environments are more likely to prioritize flexibility, decentralization, and real time decision making to remain competitive [5].

While the literature acknowledges environmental uncertainty as a contextual factor influencing strategic planning, its role as a moderating variable in the relationship between internal strategies and organizational resilience remains underdeveloped [6]. Most studies treat uncertainty as a background element rather than a factor that can strengthen or weaken the effects of SHRM, leadership adaptability, and employee engagement on resilience outcomes [7]. Particularly in tourism, where uncertainty is inherent, there is a lack of empirical work exploring how the impact of internal mechanisms varies under different levels of environmental instability [8]. Understanding this moderating role is essential to developing adaptive strategies that remain effective across different scenarios. Future research should therefore consider environmental uncertainty as a dynamic external force that interacts with internal processes to shape resilience in tourism organizations [9].

3. Method

This study employs a qualitative exploratory design through a structured literature review to investigate the role of strategic human resource management (HRM) practices in building organizational resilience in the tourism industry during times of crisis and uncertainty. A qualitative approach is well suited for examining complex organizational phenomena that involve contextual interactions, interpretive meanings, and evolving processes [1]. The research focuses on three core HRM dimensions HR flexibility, leadership agility, and strategic workforce planning identified as key enablers of resilience. Additionally, employee engagement is analyzed as a mediating variable, while organizational culture is considered a moderating factor influencing the effectiveness of internal strategies [2].

Data were collected from 35 peer reviewed journal articles published between 2020 and 2024, sourced from academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and ScienceDirect. Articles were selected based on thematic relevance, methodological rigor, and conceptual clarity concerning strategic HRM, organizational behavior, and resilience theory. The data were analyzed using thematic content analysis, a widely used qualitative method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data. NVivo version 14 software supported the open coding, axial categorization, and thematic synthesis process to uncover underlying relationships among the variables [3], [4].

This method facilitates the development of an integrative conceptual framework aligned with dynamic capability theory, which is highly applicable to the tourism sector an industry particularly vulnerable to crises and highly reliant on human capital [5], [6]. The structured literature review enables a robust and theory driven understanding of how HRM strategies can be operationalized to enhance resilience in tourism organizations facing volatile environments.

3.1. Research Design

This research adopts a qualitative exploratory approach using a structured literature review method to investigate the contribution of strategic human resource management (SHRM) practices to organizational resilience within the tourism industry. Qualitative methodology is appropriate for analyzing complex, dynamic, and context dependent organizational phenomena [1]. The study focuses on three core HRM dimensions HR flexibility, leadership agility, and strategic workforce planning as foundational enablers of resilience. Furthermore, employee engagement is analyzed as a mediating factor, while organizational culture serves as a moderating variable influencing the effectiveness of HR strategies [2].

3.2. Data Collection

Data were obtained through a comprehensive review of peer reviewed journal articles published between 2020 and 2024, sourced from reputable academic databases such as

Scopus, Web of Science, and ScienceDirect. Articles were selected based on their theoretical relevance to SHRM, organizational behavior, and resilience, as well as their methodological rigor. The inclusion criteria emphasized clarity in conceptual frameworks and applicability to organizational contexts under uncertainty [3]. In total, 35 studies were selected for analysis, forming the foundation of the conceptual model developed in this study.

3.3. Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis was employed to extract patterns, themes, and relationships across the reviewed literature. This method, widely used in qualitative research, involved a systematic process of open coding, axial categorization, and thematic synthesis to identify recurring constructs and their interconnections [4]. NVivo 14 software was used to facilitate the coding process and ensure analytical consistency. The outcome was the construction of an integrative conceptual framework that highlights the interaction between HRM practices and organizational resilience, grounded in the dynamic capabilities theory [5].

4. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study underscore that organizational resilience in the tourism sector is significantly shaped by the strategic synergy of five key human resource management (HRM) dimensions: HR flexibility, leadership agility, strategic workforce planning, employee en-gagement, and organizational culture. Thematic analysis, conducted using NVivo 14 across 35 peer reviewed journal articles (2020–2024), revealed that HR flexibility including role reallo-cation, adaptive scheduling, and multi skilling directly enhances an organization's capacity to adapt to disruptions. Leadership agility was consistently associated with fast decision making, proactive strategic alignment, and organizational coherence in times of uncertainty. Moreover, strategic workforce planning offered anticipatory advantages by aligning talent development initiatives with long term business needs, thereby sustaining operational continuity.

Employee engagement was identified as a mediating factor that reinforced the linkage between HR strategies and resilience outcomes. Organizations exhibiting high levels of en-gagement demonstrated greater adaptability, creativity, and internal cohesion all crucial traits for navigating volatile environments. Concurrently, organizational culture moderated the efficacy of HR practices by either fostering or impeding adaptive behaviors. Cultures promoting openness, trust, and continuous learning significantly amplified the influence of HR strategies on resil-ience. These findings substantiate the theoretical proposition that resilience is not the product of discrete HR initiatives, but rather of their integrative deployment within a dynamic capability framework [18]. The study affirms the relevance of organizational learning and strategic alignment in enhancing long term adaptability and survival under crisis, in line with the per-spectives offered by Duchek [6] and Teece et al. [18].

Table 1. Roles of HRM Dimensions in Organizational Resilience

No	HRM Variable	Primary Role	Function in Resilience
1	HR Flexibility	Role adjustment, flexible scheduling	Operational adaptability
2	Leadership Agility	Fast, participative decisions	Strategic responsiveness
3	Workforce Planning	Forecasting, proactive talent mapping	Long-term preparedness
4	Employee Engagement	Psychological involvement	Mediates HR strategy outcomes
5	Organizational Culture	Open, innovative values	Moderates adaptive behaviors

Table 1 presents a synthesized view of how five core dimensions of human resource management (HRM) contribute distinctly and interactively to building organizational resilience, particularly in the tourism industry. The table identifies each HRM variable, outlines its primary role, and describes its specific function in enhancing resilience. This framework offers a practical and conceptual roadmap for understanding how internal organizational strategies can be deployed cohesively to cope with external disruptions and uncertainty.

First, HR Flexibility encompasses the capacity to adjust roles, shift responsibilities, and adopt flexible work arrangements, such as remote work or compressed schedules. This dimension is critical for ensuring operational adaptability, allowing organizations to respond swiftly to dynamic changes without compromising core functions. For instance, during a crisis, reassigning staff to critical functions or adopting hybrid work models helps maintain service continuity. Second, Leadership Agility refers to the ability of organizational leaders to make timely, context aware decisions, while also fostering inclusive participation. Its function in resilience is strategic responsiveness, where agile leaders can pivot organizational strategies and guide teams through uncertainty with clarity and confidence. Agile leadership not only mitigates panic during crises but also strengthens collective motivation and trust, which are crucial in tourism environments where emotional labor is high.

Third, Strategic Workforce Planning involves proactive forecasting of talent needs, capability mapping, and aligning workforce development with future organizational goals. This variable directly supports long term preparedness, ensuring that the organization is not only reacting to current disruptions but also building capacity to face future shocks. Through succession planning, skills inventories, and scenario based planning, organizations become more anticipative rather than reactive. Fourth, Employee Engagement highlights the psychological commitment and involvement of employees with their organization's mission and goals. In this framework, it acts as a mediator, transforming HR strategies into observable behaviors and performance outcomes. Engaged employees tend to be more innovative,

cooperative, and resilient on a personal level, thus amplifying the collective organizational capacity to cope with stressors.

Finally, Organizational Culture is positioned as a moderator in this model, influencing the extent to which HR strategies are internalized and effectively executed. Cultures that encourage openness, innovation, and trust facilitate adaptive behavior across all levels of the organization. For instance, a learning oriented culture enables rapid feedback loops and continuous improvement, thereby magnifying the impact of leadership decisions and HR policies. Conversely, rigid or hierarchical cultures may inhibit adaptability, regardless of how well HR strategies are designed. As demonstrated in prior literature, the alignment between HRM practices and supportive cultural values is essential for translating policy into practice, especially under volatile and uncertain conditions [6], [7].

Taken together, Table 1 provides a comprehensive understanding that organizational resilience is not derived from a single HR component, but from the integrated and context sensitive implementation of multiple HR practices. The table not only highlights the functional contributions of each dimension but also emphasizes their interdependence within a strategic framework. This reinforces the theoretical model based on dynamic capabilities theory, which posits that organizational adaptability arises from orchestrated internal processes rather than isolated interventions [8].

5. Conclusion

This study provides a theoretically grounded and practically relevant analysis of how strategic human resource management (SHRM) practices contribute to organizational resilience in the tourism industry a sector highly vulnerable to external shocks and crises. By applying a qualitative exploratory approach through structured thematic analysis of 35 scholarly articles published between 2020 and 2024, the research identified five critical HRM dimensions: HR flexibility, leadership agility, strategic workforce planning, employee engagement, and organ-izational culture. These variables do not operate in isolation but interact synergistically to enhance resilience outcomes. The findings confirm that HR flexibility ensures operational adaptability; leadership agility provides strategic responsiveness; and workforce planning se-cures long term preparedness. Furthermore, employee engagement acts as a mediating force that converts HR strategies into tangible actions, while organizational culture moderates the extent to which adaptive behaviors are facilitated or constrained.

The study's central contribution lies in its integrative conceptual framework, which is underpinned by dynamic capabilities theory and emphasizes the role of internal organizational mechanisms particularly those embedded in human capital in navigating uncertainty. Unlike previous research that often treats HR practices, leadership, and engagement as discrete el-

ements, this study positions them as interrelated and strategically aligned processes that collectively drive resilience. The inclusion of employee engagement and organizational culture as mediating and moderating variables, respectively, offers a nuanced understanding of how strategic intentions are translated into adaptive outcomes. Although the research is limited by its reliance on secondary data and qualitative synthesis, it lays the foundation for future empirical testing and model validation across various sectors. For HR leaders and policymakers in tourism, the study offers actionable insights: resilience can be systematically cultivated through deliberate alignment of flexible, inclusive, and learning oriented HR strategies.

6. Acknowledgements

Reference

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