

INFLUENCE OF ORGANISATIONAL FEATURES IN THE PERCEIVED PERFORMANCE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS

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Research Background

This research is a component of the Bushfire CRC's Organising for Effective Incident Management (OEIM) project. It sought to understand how different organisational features become important in managing complex situations in large scale emergency situations.



The research examined relationships between organisational features, capabilities and processes, to assist fire service agencies to develop organisational strategies for better emergency response performance.

Research Questions

What organisational features become important to fulfill the competing demands in emergency management response?

How do these organisational features relate to perceptions of successful emergency management response?

Do these organisational features predict performance differently depending on the type of organisation involved in emergency management response?

What might be the implications for fire service agencies to better manage complex fire events?

Theoretical Framework

This study employed a theoretical framework, illustrated in Fig. 1 below, to analyse the influence of organisational features in the response processes.

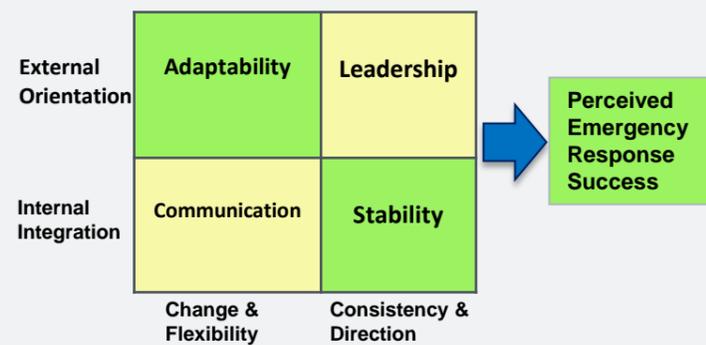


Fig.1. Organisational features and perceived emergency response success (after Denison's model of organisational culture and performance, 1990, 2005)

Organisational types considered in the study

I. Established Organisations

- Emergency management is a core business and committed to emergency response on a daily basis
e.g. urban fire services

II. Expanding Organisations

- Emergency management is their core business, but organisational structure needs to expand to involve large number of volunteers to fulfil the demands of the emergency situation
e.g. Country Fire Service / Rural Fire Service

III. Extending Organisations

- Not involved in emergency management on a daily basis, but it is included in the broad mandate
- Shift to new organisational structure to cope with emergency situations
e.g. land management agencies

Fig 2. Organisational types during emergency response (adapted from Dynes, 1998; Boin & Paul't Hart, 2010).

Method

An organisational survey was conducted among experienced emergency management personnel in Australia and New Zealand; 200 responses from personnel working at the State, region and the local IMT level were utilised for the analysis.

Statistical analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between organisational features and perceived emergency management performance / success

Major Findings

1. Perceived success of emergency management response was positively correlated with organisational features namely, adaptability, communication, leadership and stability.
2. Multiple regression analysis showed that perceived success was predicted by adaptability, communication, leadership and stability in all organisations.
3. However, there was difference in predictive significance of organisational features in emergency management response of different organisational types.

Strong predictors of success based on organisational types are listed below;

Established organisation - Stability and Leadership

Expanding organisation - Adaptability and Stability

Extending organisation - Adaptability and Leadership

4. Stakeholder communication had less predictive significance in all organisational types; this indicates the preference of emergency services agencies to look internally within their own operations than externally to build relationships with other stakeholders, which is an area of concern

Outcomes and Expected Benefits

This study facilitates in developing a tool for organisational response analysis, training/ exercises and organisational change.

It is important to note that "one size doesn't fit all", and one approach to strengthen capability may not be appropriate in another organisational type.

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