

# New Insights in the Basic Psychological Needs of Leaders Not to Fail Organizational Change: Post-Pandemic View on Leader's Experience—A Qualitative Content Analysis

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This paper aims to uncover underlying mechanisms and basic psychological needs of leaders that will enable them to cope with organizational change in a multi-crisis context. **Design/Methodology/Approach:** This study uses the qualitative research approach of qualitative content analysis to explore leader's positive and negative experiences during change in a multi-crisis context. **Findings:** This research highlights the critical role of leaders' basic psychological needs in organizational change within a multi-crisis context, thereby illustrating the necessity of providing need-based experiences and need-supported change designs. This study has recognized the importance of taking into consideration all four identified levels of change: personal, situational, decisional, and transitional—when implementing change initiatives, as a need-supported change design. Data indicate that, despite expressing a leader's strong need for involvement and community, the need is not adequately satisfied by rituals and *communitas*. These results indicate the need to integrate both success factors and failure factors in a simultaneous manner to increase leader's positive experiences and reduce negative experiences during change, with the aim of providing need-based experiences. **Originality/Value:** This paper provides new findings and theoretical descriptions in the understudied area of a leader's basic psychological needs and emerged success and failure factors during change in a multi-crisis context.

## Keywords

Qualitative Research, Leaders, Change, Basic Psychological Needs, Experiences

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## 1. Introduction

Today, organizations are facing disruptive change with a “change or die” attitude (Mikhailova, 2022) due to climate change, COVID-19 pandemic, geo-political conflicts, and other multi-crisis (Gencer & Batirlik, 2023; Islam, 2023; Lanier, 2021; Pradies et al., 2021; Villasana-Arreguín & Pastor Pérez, 2023). Over decades, studies have identified several factors for the failure and success of change and transformation projects (Cleary, 1911; Ginzberg & Reilley, 1957; McClintock, 1937), typically noting high failure rates (Parker, 1980; Pasmore, 1976; Waters, Salipante Jr., & Notz, 1978). The risk of failure rates for organizational change has not improved substantially (De Keyser, Guiette, & Vandenbempt, 2021; Hughes, 2011, 2022).

Leadership is the main factor that influences the success or failure of change (Abbas & Asghar, 2010; Bligh, Kohles, & Yan, 2018; Hughes, 2023; Xenikou, 2022). Exploring the leader’s personal experience of change can give insight into the underlying mechanisms and basic psychological needs for failure and success (Heckmann, Steger, & Dowling, 2016; Potosky & Azan, 2023; Stensaker & Meyer, 2012). The basic psychological need is a part of the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2022). Self-determination theory (SDT) emerged empirically from the theory of human motivation and personality in social contexts, development, and wellness, focusing on types of motivation, focusing on autonomous motivation, controlled motivation, and amotivation as predictors of performance, relational, and well-being outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2008, 2012). Studies on leaders basic need satisfaction and frustration show that the satisfaction of leader’s basic psychological needs is positively associated with well-being (David, 2016; Jones, Turner, & Barker, 2021; Vansteenkiste, Ryan, & Soenens, 2020) and that this relationship is cross-cultural (Church et al., 2013). Updated basic psychological needs theory highlights the distinction between the lack of fulfillment of needs and the experience of need frustration, and their asymmetrical relationship (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, Ryan, Bosch, & Thøgersen-Ntoumani, 2011). Low need satisfaction and need frustration can be both associated with organizational change failure. Organizational change failure occurs when the organization does not achieve the desired goals of change (Schwarz, Bouckennooghe, & Vakola, 2021).

Commonly cited failure factors include lack of alignment between values, norms, and behaviors; inadequate communication of goals, processes, and directions; lack of a change vision; lack of management commitment and support; and people’s resistance to change (Cameron & Green, 2019; Kotter, 2012; Kunert & Staar, 2018; Srivastava & Agrawal, 2020). Four success factors are typically identified: communication of goals, processes, and direction; a vision/change message; early and active involvement of affected individuals; and commitment, involvement, participation, support, and presence from top management (Dempsey, Geitner, Brennan, & McAvoy, 2021).

In conclusion, basic psychological needs might be the key to change manage-

ment success or failure. Successful change leaders are those who mind the importance of satisfying their own and others' psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Individuals have when experiencing changes in the organization. These basic psychological needs are necessary for successful change and should be considered when developing strategies, plans and approaches to manage organizational change. Leadership in change management is also essential when addressing the failure factors associated with change, such as lack of commitment, direction and support, and resistance to change. The need to understand the psychological needs and their impact on organizational change is of utmost importance to address these challenges and reap the benefits of successful change initiatives. Effective change leadership is the secret of managing change effectively and facilitating the desired change outcomes.

### **Aims of the Study**

This research examines the experiences of leader's satisfaction or frustration with their basic psychological needs influenced by success and failure factors of organizational change in a multi-crisis context. The aim is to uncover success, failure factors, and the basic psychological needs of leaders and answer the final question of how a need-supported change design should look like.

To fulfill this purpose, four research questions are proposed:

- 1) What are the positive and negative experiences of leaders of organizational change in a multi-crisis context?
- 2) Which success and failure factors influence leaders' behavior when managing organizational change in a multi-crisis context?
- 3) What are the basic psychological needs of leaders within organizational change in a multi-crisis context?

Based on the findings of the research questions, the final question should be answered: How a need-supported change design should look like to improve the chances of leaders to successfully deal with organizational change in a multi-crisis context?

Answering these questions will provide valuable insights into how organizations may better manage organizational change in a multi-crisis context and increase their chances for success.

This study uses a qualitative research approach (Bryman, 2004; Lanka, Lanka, Rostron, & Singh, 2020) to address the four research questions, employing semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021; Bearman, 2019) to collect data based on a theoretical framework (Varpio, Paradis, Uijtdehaage, & Young, 2020). A snowball sampling technique (Handcock & Gile, 2011; Naderifar, Goli, & Ghaljaie, 2017) is employed to select participants from a range of backgrounds and experiences, with a minimum sample size of more than 30 leaders. The qualitative content analysis developed by Mayring (Mayring, 2019; Schilling, 2017) is utilized to analyze the data, allowing the identification of underlying mechanisms, patterns, themes and rela-

tionships within the data.

## 2. Review of the Literature

This literature review offers a thorough analysis of leadership in the context of organizational change, with particular attention to leaders' change experience and factors in organizational change that may lead to failure, as well as those that can lead to success. Additionally, the review will explore various change models to investigate a leader's change experience and how the basic psychological needs theory applies in this context.

### 2.1. Organizational Change, Leadership, and Leaders

Organizational change has been seen as an ongoing process of improvement, allowing organizations to become more adaptive to shifting external and internal customer demands. Change readiness, change capability, and change demand have been proven to be essential components of successful organizational change (Anyieni, Ondari, Mayianda, & Damaris, 2016; Burnes & Hughes, 2023; Krüger & PeTRY, 2005). In addition, research has highlighted the need for both change and constancy to coexist in a coherent, irreducible relationship (Loubser, 2013; Strauss, 2012). These ideas can be traced back to ancient philosophy, with Greek philosophers such as Parmenides stressing an unchanging reality and Heraclitus proposing an ever-changing world (Nayak, 2008; Poster, 1996). From an Eastern perspective, change has been likened to a self-generating process with no starting or ending point (Hon, 2019). Process views of organizational change have shed light on liminal events, wherein change and constancy simultaneously occur (Farjoun, 2010). This idea of plasticity has been suggested to arise as a consequence of constantly evolving entities of organizing (Weick, 1979) that may or may not be the result of deliberate human action (Guimarães-Costa & Cunha, 2013).

Complexity leadership has enabled organizations to be seen as complex adaptive systems (CASs), consisting of dynamic agent-networks based on interdependent hierarchies, structures, and processes, in order to facilitate creative problem-solving and fast adaptation (Homer-Dixon, 2011; Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009; Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). By emphasizing leadership as an emergent process between agents, this approach highlights the importance of leadership in the evolution and cultivation of an organization (Abbas & Asghar, 2010). Leaders must possess the skills to identify, assess, and address change management challenges with a vision for enabling creativity and innovation (Bligh, Kohles, & Yan, 2018). They must also cultivate a culture of trust, respect, ownership, and accountability (Xenikou, 2022). Furthermore, leaders must find a balance between risk-taking and cherishing learning opportunities from mistakes (Bligh, Kohles, & Yan, 2018). Lastly, it is essential for leaders to address ethical issues within the organization to ensure that it aligns with organizational values and mission (Burnes & Hughes, 2023).

## 2.2. Leaders' Change Experience

Researchers have studied how leaders' previous experiences with organizational changes influence their reaction to subsequent changes. Results suggest that frequent exposure to change can lead to increased fatigue and cynicism towards change initiatives, however, it can also offer opportunities for individuals to develop more constructive change capabilities (Stensaker & Meyer, 2012). Additionally, Heckmann, Steger, and Dowling (2016) have found evidence that positive prior change experiences are connected to an organization's capacity for change. Research has demonstrated that experience is a complex interplay between an individual and their environment (Elkjaer, 2009). It consists of not only sensing, perceiving, and meaning-making, but also form and process (Paulsen, 2020). Individuals have been shown to reflect on past experiences when experiencing current situations, thereby shaping their experience (Elkjaer, 2009). Furthermore, individuals have been found to create something new out of prior experiences, thus transforming their experience (Paulsen, 2020). This suggests that experience has been constituted by a continuous transaction between a person and their environment—both the real and their inner world—and is bound to time. Jarvis (2006) has conceptualized experience into four components. He highlighted sensation as an important part of experiencing, recognizing, and assessing information from the physical and social environment, and responding accordingly. Awareness and disjuncture refer to the moments of interruption and unfamiliarity when a situation is confronted. Interest and perception involve the engagement with, and observation of elements that have significance and shape our view of them. Finally, interpretation and meaning entails the reflection on the meaning of an experience and the formation of understanding. Together, these components of experience facilitate meaningful interaction with our environment (Jarvis, 2006).

## 2.3. Failure Factors in Organizational Change

Organizational failure in the context of change has been recognized as a deviation from expected and desired outcomes (Schwarz, Bouckenooghe, & Vakola, 2021). A lack of knowledge about the future state is often identified as the primary reason for change failure (Kunert & Staar, 2018). Furthermore, organizational culture is recognized to be a critical factor for successful change; it is considered to be a shared social mindset and the starting point for all internal and external communication and cooperation processes (Schein, 1985, 2010; Schein, Turner, Schein, & Hayes, 2021). When values, norms, and behaviors restrictions do not support development, the organization is more likely to underperform and experience failure in the long run. Additionally, the way an organization implements change is reflective of its cultural characteristics. In this way, culture can be thought of as a "pattern of shared basic assumptions" which helps a group to make sense of the environment and solve their problems (Schein, 2010: p. 17). Consequently, culture is a mechanism of social control and is closely linked to leadership as it is "the creation and management of culture" (Schein, 2010: p. 2).

Leaders are thus recommended to be aware of where cultural change forces have caused dysfunction and initiate a process of adaptation (Schein, 2010: pp. 22-23).

Learning has been seen as another relevant mechanism based on two processes 1) “positive problem solving”, aiming to cope with external adaptation tasks, and 2) the reduction of anxiety regarding internal coping processes (Schein, 2010: p. 80). As organizations have changed, they have had to deal with aspects of member identity issues, common goal setting, mechanisms of power, and how to regulate potential aggression and intimacy (Schein, 2010: p. 84). The top five problems in creating readiness for change have included: 1) too many activities without prioritization; 2) interests/target conflicts of the parties involved or no clear objectives; 3) lack of support from the line management; 4) lack of commitment from the management board; and 5) paralysis of the organization due to persistent reorganization (Srivastava & Agrawal, 2020). Research has shown that organizations that prioritize human integration mechanisms tend to have more committed employees than those that prioritize task integration objectives while disregarding human integration. This has been because when human integration is disregarded, employees may have experienced negative emotions such as anger and insecurity towards the merged firm (Bansal, 2015).

Resistance to organizational change has been frequently cited as one of the most important reasons for difficulties in implementing change and the failure of change (Cameron & Green, 2019; Chiaburu, Peng, Oh, Banks, & Lomeli, 2013; Kotter, 2012; Thundiyil, Chiaburu, Oh, Banks, & Peng, 2015). Hence, all forces which support stability of personality or in social systems can be judged as resisting change (Watson, 1971). Resistance to change has been a set of dissenting actions that can slow, oppose, or obstruct a change management effort. It has consisted of three areas of resistance: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Cognitive resistance has focused on how someone thinks about change, affective resistance looks at emotional and psychological reactions, and behavioral resistance is the action response due to both cognitive and affective resistances. This has been seen in listlessness, opposition, discomposure, evasion, arguing, open criticism, spreading negative words, reluctant compliance and delaying or misguided application (Dempsey, Geitner, Brennan, & McAvoy, 2021). Stanley, Meyer, and Topolnytsky (2005) have suggested that change-specific cynicism is an indicator of resistance to change, as it can be seen as a form of self-protection from the part of the employees in the face of ambiguous or disappointing events. Organizational cynicism has been a response to unsuccessful attempts of change and is indicated by a decrease in trust in the agents of change. It has been associated with negative outcomes such as apathy, resignation, alienation, lack of hope, lack of trust in others, suspicion, disillusion, low performance, interpersonal conflicts, absenteeism, and exhaustion (Grama & Todericiu, 2016).

Societal changes, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have had effects on the workplace, seen through the Great Resignation and quiet quitting (Lane, 2023).

Resignation is a psychological concept that describes the experience of indi-

viduals who feel they have lost control over a situation and thus have accepted the current state of affairs (Scheier, Weintraub, & Carver, 1986). This feeling can be experienced when the risks and costs associated with making a decision or taking action seem too high (Semmer, 1990). Furthermore, resignation can also be the result of sustained or continual change processes (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978). Resignation is experience and expectation-based, with past experiences influencing an individual's current expectations of their ability to influence a situation (self-efficacy) (Barysch, 2016; Seligman, Petermann, & Rockstroh, 1979). The three deficits associated with resignation are a motivational deficit, cognitive deficit, and an emotional deficit. The motivational deficit is expressed through resignation and reduced performance, as the helpless person expects that active behavior will have no effect on the outcome. The cognitive deficit describes the impairment that learned helplessness has had on negative learning processes, which can be very hard to revise once learned. Lastly, the emotional deficit shows the influence that learned helplessness has had on the emotional state, with feelings of helplessness, sadness, hopelessness and even fear taking over when one believes their actions are futile.

Reasons for resistance to organizational change have included employees' attitudes/disposition toward change; fear of the unknown (uncertainty); lack of understanding of the firm's intentions; fear of failure; disruption of routine; increased workload; lack of rewards for implementing change; perceived loss of control, security, or status; poor leadership; dysfunctional organizational culture; organizational size and rigidity; lack of management support for the change; lack of trust between management and employees; inability or unwillingness of management to deal with resistance; lack of participation due to top-down steering; organizational politics/conflict; internal conflict for resources; lack of consequences for inadequate or poor performance; the content of the change; and poor implementation planning (Dempsey, Geitner, Brennan, & McAvoy, 2021).

Resistance to change has been an antecedent to the turnover intention that often represents employees' voluntary turnover in the future (Srivastava & Agrawal, 2020). Perceived organizational support has been shown to reduce the influence of resistance to change on turnover intention (Cameron & Green, 2019; Kotter, 2012). Leaders have been able to use value systems as a mechanism to successfully implement change within their organizations. By promoting a new set of values, they have been able to use the concept of "purpose" to control and influence organizational change. However, this has caused a polarization of attitudes, potentially with those within the organization having different views on the values being promoted, creating tension and further complicating the process of change (Marginson, 2009).

#### **2.4. Possible Antidotes to Organizational Change Failure and Success Factors**

Organizational change failure has been combatted by creating a sense of urgency or pressure for identifying and discussing crises, potential crises or major change opportunities; developing a clear vision; communicating the vision; removing

obstacles; creating short-term wins; aligning structures, systems, structures and policies; anchoring changes firmly in the corporate success and corporate culture; and building a powerful support base (Kotter, 1995, 2012; Rosenberg & Mosca, 2011). In order to successfully manage change, a number of success factors have been identified. Dempsey, Geitner, Brennan, and McAvoy (2021) have identified four key success factors for successful change management: 1) communication; 2) creating a vision/change message; 3) early and active participation of all stakeholders; and 4) commitment from top management. Effective communication, both of goals and processes, has been essential to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the change. Creating a clear vision/change message and communicating it effectively throughout the organization have been important. Early and active participation from all stakeholders, including individuals and groups impacted by the change, has been vital to ensure that the change is accepted and embraced. Lastly, top management commitment, involvement, participation, support, and presence have been essential to ensure successful implementation of the change. There has also been a factor dependency between the failure factors and success factors, as well as complementarity. For example, “resistance to change” failure factor has been mitigated through “communication: goals, processes and giving orientation”, “create a vision/change message and communicate it throughout the organization”, “early adequate, active participation of all individuals/groups affected” and “top management: commitment, involvement, participation, support, attendance, presence” success factors (Dempsey, Geitner, Brennan, & McAvoy, 2021). Similarly, Jones, Firth, Hannibal, and Ogunseyin (2019) have identified relevant success factors: need for effective communication, need for effective leadership, importance of team work, need to involve employees and managers, importance of culture, involve other stakeholders more, need resources, stick to a systematic approach/model.

## **2.5. Change Models to Investigate Leader’s Change Experience**

Kurt Lewin’s field theory of change and Arnold van Gennep’s rites of passage model provide insight into understanding and managing change. Lewin’s field theory of change identifies environmental factors as the main determinants of behavior. Van Gennep’s rites of passage model stresses the importance of rituals and ceremonies as powerful tools for transitioning a person, group, or organization from one state to another. Each of these models is useful for understanding and managing change and can help develop effective change management strategies.

### **2.5.1. Kurt Lewin’s Field Theory**

Kurt Lewin’s field theory has been relevant in research about organizational change (Crosby, 2020; Endrejat & Burnes, 2022; Kump, 2023; Muldoon, 2020). According to Lewin (1942, 1943), the life space is composed of only those aspects of the environment that are perceived by the individual and this space is populated by psychological forces that can either motivate or demotivate a person. He expressed his theory in the formula “behavior is a function of the rela-



tion between person and situation)”, which stands for behavior, function (forces), and person-in-environment (Burnes & Cooke, 2013).

Lewin has recognized that individuals have separate life spaces for different activities and, if one can identify and plot the potency of the forces in a person’s life space, it is possible to understand and change their behavior (Bogner, 2020). He also stated that successful behavioral change can only be achieved if individuals and groups can be helped to understand and reflect on the forces that impinge on their lives. In order to do this, Lewin proposed that a key concept of field theory is the idea of driving and restraining forces, which are based on the positive and negative valences of goals (Bogner, 2020). Valence has been an important concept in Kurt Lewin’s Field Theory, which states that the behavior of an individual is determined by the personal and environmental characteristics of the situation. This value has been dependent on the person’s need, as well as the characteristics of the target object (Bogner, 2017; Fitzek, 2013). Valence can be positive, neutral, or negative and can also be affected by the environment, as an object may have different values in different situations (Bogner, 2017; Fitzek, 2013).

Kurt Lewin’s field theory has suggested that to understand and change behavior, the context and environment of a situation must be considered. Lewin has stated that the relationship to the group and its rank within it are the most important factors in determining feelings of security or insecurity. To achieve successful change, it is important to consider the interactions and negotiations between those involved, as well as blocked goals that can cause tension and various behavioral and psychological consequences. Managers should also clearly communicate expectations and goals to their employees to ensure a successful transition. Lewin’s theory has emphasized that change is a learning process, and that a balance between driving and restraining forces is essential for successful change (Bogner, 2020; Burnes & Cooke, 2013; Roşca, 2020).

### **2.5.2. Van Gennep’s Rite of Passage**

Organizational change has been an ongoing process of transformation that takes place within a given culture (Schein, 2010). It has involved the adoption of new practices, beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape how a group of people understand and interact with the world. Cultural change has been facilitated through a variety of means, including the introduction of new cultural artifacts, the use of rituals and ceremonies, and the emergence of new social movements (Howard-Grenville, Golden-Biddle, Irwin, & Mao, 2011). Rituals and ceremonies have played an important role in facilitating cultural change, as they have provided a structure and context for sharing values and beliefs (Coyne & Mathers, 2011). Liminal experiences have also been used to create a sense of awe and mystery within a group and to help foster communication and understanding between members of a group. These experiences have involved a period of transition and often have involved a kind of equality in which those who have passed through the liminal stage have been equalized in terms of status and power (Beech, 2011; Bigger, 2009; Howard-Grenville, Golden-Biddle, Irwin, & Mao, 2011). Those

shared experiences have assumed that liminal experiences and *communitas* play an important role in creating the conditions for collective transformation such as organizational change and they have supposed that self-understanding, relational ability, and a collectively felt sense of new possibilities are underlying qualities of change (Buechner, Dirkx, Konvisser, Myers, & Peleg-Baker, 2020). Liminality, rituals, and *communitas* have been elements of the concept of rites of passage. Rite of passage has been a set of rituals and activities that have served to mark and celebrate transitions between different stages of life or between different states of existence (Turner, 2004; Van Gennep, 2019). Liminality has been the state of being in-between, and it has been marked by ambiguity, indeterminacy, and instability (Turner, 2004; Van Gennep, 2019). The liminal phase of rites of passage has been a transitional period between two states, during which individuals have been equalized in terms of status and power. It has been a state of potentiality, in which new identities and new social roles may have been forged. During this phase, individuals have been suspended between the past and the future and have been open to new possibilities and new experiences. Rituals have often been used to mark this transition from one state to another. Through ritualization, the transition has not only been acknowledged but also celebrated. Rituals have helped to create a sense of shared identity and a feeling of belonging within a group, as well as to foster communication and understanding between members of a group. They have also been used to create new meanings and to challenge existing social norms or beliefs. Additionally, rituals have been used to honor the accomplishments of individuals or groups, or to commemorate important events in a culture's history (Turner, 2004; Van Gennep, 2019). *Communitas* has been a concept that emphasizes equality and mutual respect, and it has often been expressed through rituals, ceremonies, and other collective activities (Van Gennep, 2019). *Communitas* has been a concept that implies a sense of equality, mutual respect, and shared humanity among all people regardless of their social status or power. It has been a notion of unity and connectedness, and has often been expressed through rituals, ceremonies, and other collective activities. It has been a recognition of our common humanity and a celebration of our shared experiences. *Communitas* has been seen in many cultures, from the traditional practice of potlatch in the Pacific Northwest, to the Mexican Day of the Dead, to the Indian practice of "sitting in a circle" during meetings. It has also been expressed in the practice of hospitality, in the acceptance of strangers, and in the willingness to share (Kapferer, 2019; Turner, 2012). *Communitas* has been a powerful force in bringing about a sense of collective transformation. Through rituals and ceremonies, people have come together in a shared experience and created a feeling of unity and solidarity. This sense of connectedness has helped to create a feeling of hope and possibility, as well as a recognition of our common humanity (Van Gennep, 2019). It has also helped to foster communication and understanding between members of a group or community and has served as a tool to challenge existing social norms or be-

liefs. By creating a space for transformation and transformation of consciousness, *communitas* has been a powerful force for positive social change in organizations (Islam & Zyphur, 2009). In sum, liminality, *communitas*, and rituals have been important components in cultural and organizational change. They have helped to create a sense of shared identity and a feeling of belonging within a group, as well as to foster communication and understanding between members of a group (Howard-Grenville, Golden-Biddle, Irwin, & Mao, 2011). Liminality and *communitas* have also created new meanings and challenged existing social norms and beliefs (Islam & Zyphur, 2009). Furthermore, these concepts have been used to mark important transitions and to honor the accomplishments of individuals or groups (Powley, 2004).

## 2.6. Basic Psychological Needs Theory

Basic psychological needs theory (BPNT) is a sub-theory of self-determination theory (SDT). Self-determination theory is a widely respected macro-theory of human motivation that emphasizes satisfaction of the psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Research has demonstrated that higher levels of SDT components such as competence, autonomy, relatedness led to increased acceptance and willingness to accept change in organizational contexts. For instance, a study using a large sample of employees in a Canadian telecommunications company demonstrated that providing a rationale; giving some choice on how to accomplish tasks and acknowledging feelings during organizational change increased acceptance of change. This was supported by cross-sectional and longitudinal data, revealing significant and substantial effects. Ultimately, this suggests that when leaders' and employees' psychological needs are met, they are more likely to embrace and accept change in organizations. Additionally, the study found that organizational support was associated with an increase in the strength of the effect of attitude toward change and participation in change. These findings indicate that ensuring the psychological needs of leaders and employees are supported is fundamental to the success of any organizational change endeavor (Deci, Olafsen, & Ryan, 2017; Gagne, Koestner, & Zuckerman, 2000; Huang, 2022; Rahi & Ahmad, 2020).

BPNT has proposed that there are three basic psychological needs; the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, which are universal and essential for the psychological wellbeing of leaders. It has further argued that if any of these basic psychological needs are frustrated, negative consequences for leadership and organizational change can follow (Deci, Olafsen, & Ryan, 2017; Mirza, Younus, Hasan, Yousaf, & Hafeez, 2023; Nylén, 2020; Rahi, Alghizzawi, Ahmad, Munawar Khan, & Ngah, 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2022). Hereby, leadership shapes the daily social environment wherein leaders and employees find their needs satisfied or frustrated. BPNT provides a theoretical validation for leadership approaches such as self-leadership, shared leadership, collaborative leadership, and other decentralized, less hierarchical organizations. These leadership styles offer

a work context that can fulfill the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness of all participants. Nevertheless, the lack of satisfaction of basic psychological needs is not the same as need frustration: leader's basic psychological needs may not be satisfied, but dissatisfaction does not necessarily imply the frustration of basic psychological needs (Van Tuin, Schaufeli, & Van Rhenen, 2020). A recent meta-analysis review of self-determination theory (Howard, Gagné, Morin, & Van den Broeck, 2016; Van den Broeck, Ferris, Chang, & Rosen, 2016) has tested the unique contribution of each of these basic psychological needs (need-based experience) to psychological growth, internalization, and psychological well-being. This review meta-analysis review supported the hypothesis that these three basic psychological needs are positively related to psychological growth, internalization, and psychological well-being, and are negatively related to role stressors, work-family conflict, and job insecurity, also factors that could contribute to success of organizational change and to decrease the occurrence of failure factors. Hence, important for successful organizational change can be the evidence that the three basic psychological needs are related to intrinsic motivation and workplace outcomes such as effort, deviance behavior, absenteeism, and task performance.

More in depth, psychological autonomy, competence, and relatedness are three important basic psychological needs that impact emotional well-being of leaders within their social environment. To promote this well-being of leaders, it is important to understand how best to support (need-support) the fulfillment of these basic psychological needs (need-based experience) in the workplace and organizational change context (Fotiadis, Abdulrahman, & Spyridou, 2019; Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Ryan, & Soenens, 2020). To better understand the details of the three basic psychological needs and their characteristics in **Table 1**, the description of the need, the derived need-based experience and the need-support has been presented (Fotiadis, Abdulrahman, & Spyridou, 2019; Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Ryan, & Soenens, 2020).

Identifying the need-based experiences and the need-support of basic psychological needs it is essential for organizations to understand the beneficial aspects of creating an environment that meets these basic psychological needs of leaders (need-support) in order to ensure they are optimizing their own and the employees' motivation and potential to deal successful with organizational change (Howard, Gagné, Morin, & Van den Broeck, 2016; Van den Broeck, Ferris, Chang, & Rosen, 2016).

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

This theoretical framework provides a basis for understanding the behavior of a particular phenomenon and is developed from existing theories to explain why it occurs and it is used to guide research of the study and to provide a structure for interpreting and analyzing data (Varpio, Paradis, Uijtdehaage, & Young, 2020).

**Table 1.** Characterization of the basic psychological needs.

Basic psychological need	Description	Need-based experience	Need-based support
<b>Autonomy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaders' capacity to make informed and uncoerced decisions.</li> <li>• Experience of volition and willingness.</li> <li>• Satisfaction: a sense of integrity as when one's actions, thoughts, and feelings are self-endorsed and authentic.</li> <li>• Frustration: a sense of pressure and often conflict, such as feeling pushed in an unwanted direction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports feelings of personal satisfaction and well-being.</li> <li>• Increase capacity to achieve one's own goals within a workplace context.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing employees, the freedom of agency to make meaningful decisions.</li> <li>• By creating a workplace environment that allows them to freely engage in activities that they enjoy.</li> <li>• Managerial support and ensuring employees have control over their work.</li> </ul>
<b>Competence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual's skills and capabilities to achieve their own objectives, as well as those of their organization.</li> <li>• Experience of effectiveness and mastery.</li> <li>• Satisfaction: capably engages in activities and experiences opportunities for using and extending skills and expertise.</li> <li>• Frustration: a sense of ineffectiveness or even failure and helplessness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage personal goal setting that does not conflict with work-life balance, helping their employees to find a good fit between the two.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximized through providing positive feedback and praise.</li> </ul>
<b>Relatedness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The social nature of human beings, and their connectedness with others.</li> <li>• Experience of warmth, bonding, and care.</li> <li>• Satisfaction: connecting to and feeling significant to others.</li> <li>• Frustration: a sense of social alienation, exclusion, and loneliness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive workplace setting, feelings of closeness with others and social engagement are valued.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forming teams that enable employees to share in innovative projects.</li> <li>• Communicating about personally relevant matters.</li> <li>• Participating in shared activities.</li> <li>• Having a group of friends to share informal social time.</li> <li>• Feeling understood and appreciated.</li> <li>• Participating in pleasant activities.</li> <li>• Avoiding arguments and conflicts.</li> <li>• Avoiding self-conscious or insecure feelings.</li> <li>• Should be given the autonomy to establish and nurture relationships with whomever they choose, and to interact freely with any relevant professional networks.</li> <li>• Create a workplace environment where employees feel connected to co-workers, customers, and the organization as a whole.</li> </ul>

This study presents a theoretical framework that integrates Kurt Lewin's Field Theory of Change and Van Gennep's Rite of Passage Model, and also the basic psychological model Ryan & Deci to understand the change process and the basic psychological needs of leader's emerging their positive and negative experiences in a multi-crisis context. Lewin's (1942) and Roşca's (2020) theory emphasizes that leaders respond to environmental changes in terms of both their internal states (e.g. beliefs, attitudes, values) and external events (e.g. stimuli, pressures, conditions) (Lewin, 1942; Roşca, 2020). Van Gennep's Rite of Passage Model (Byrne, 2021; Van Gennep, 2019) identifies three stages of transition and highlights the importance of rituals and symbols in helping individuals transition between stages of life (Byrne, 2021; Van Gennep, 2019). The basic psychological needs theory (BPNT) considers the satisfaction and frustration of three psychological needs as essential for human flourishing and well-being: autonomy, competence and relatedness (Fotiadis, Abdulrahman, & Spyridou, 2019; Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2022; Vansteenkiste, Ryan, & Soenens, 2020).

This theoretical framework is useful for exploring the personal experiences of leader's during change, as well as the basic psychological needs of leader's underlying the influencing factors of their change behavior in a multi-crisis context.

**Table 2** categorizes the failure of organizational change as deviation from goals and outcomes, which can have negative consequences at various stages, situations, and domains (Schwarz, Bouckenooghe, & Vakola, 2021).

**Table 3** outlines the possible antidotes to organizational change failure and success factors supporting organizational change with the aim to reach expected goals and outcomes are categorized with the aim to apply this categorization for data analysis. These success factors can influence the organizational change in various stages, situations, and domains in a positive way (Schwarz, Bouckenooghe, & Vakola, 2021).

**Figure 1** presents the applied change models of Kurt Lewin's Field Theory of Change and Van Gennep's Rite of Passage Model as integrated into one interrelated framework. Basic psychological needs satisfaction or frustration determine failure and success factors have a mutual influence on various stages and domains of the organizational change process over time. Kurt Lewin's Field Theory of Change integrate as one episodic change cycle which can be repeated several times during an entire change process embedded in the Van Gennep's Rite of Passage Model with the main stages of separation, liminality/threshold, and incorporation.

As shown in the following, it can be argued that the basic psychological needs are related to the concepts of the selected change models in this study.

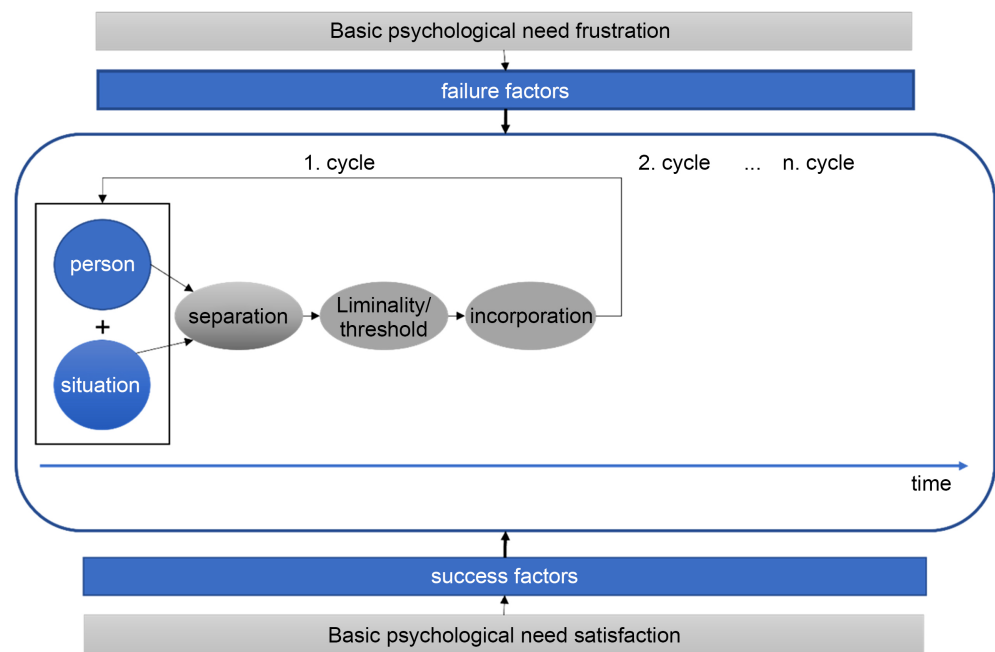
Kurt Lewin's field theory has been relevant to research about organizational change due to its focus on the importance of emotionally driven forces in motivating and demotivating leaders. According to the theory, the behavior of a leader is determined by the context and environment of the situation, as well as by the personal and environmental characteristic of the target object. This suggests that leaders require a sense of autonomy to make decisions about their own behavior, as well as a sense of competence and relatedness to feel secure within

**Table 2.** Categorization of failure factors in organizational change.

Failure category	Description	Source
<b>Lack of knowledge about the future state</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the lack of knowledge about the future state, as change is a journey into the unknown.</li> <li>• Fear of the unknown (uncertainty).</li> </ul>	Kunert and Staar (2018); Dempsey et al. (2021)
<b>Dysfunctional organizational culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values, norms and behavior restrictions do not support development.</li> <li>• Organizational culture becomes dysfunctional driven by cultural change forces.</li> </ul>	Schein (1985); Schein, Turner, Schein, and Hayes (2021); Schein (2010: pp. 22-23)
<b>Bad management and poor leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too many activities without prioritization.</li> <li>• Interests/target conflicts of the parties involved or no clear objectives.</li> <li>• Lack of support from the line management.</li> <li>• Lack of commitment from the management board.</li> <li>• Paralysis of the organization due to persistent reorganization.</li> </ul>	Srivastava and Agrawal (2020); Dempsey et al. (2021)
<b>Disregarded human integration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees may experience negative emotions such as anger and insecurity.</li> <li>• Lack of participation due to top-down steering.</li> </ul>	Bansal (2015); Dempsey et al. (2021)
<b>Resistance (dissenting actions that can slow, oppose, or obstruct a change management effort)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listlessness, opposition, discomposure.</li> <li>• Evasion, arguing, open criticism.</li> <li>• Spreading negative words.</li> <li>• Reluctant compliance and delaying or misguided application.</li> </ul>	Cameron and Green (2019); Kotter (2012); Dempsey et al. (2021)
<b>Cynicism (form of self-protection from the part of the employees in the face of ambiguous or disappointing events)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsuccessful attempts of change decrease in trust in the agents of change as apathy, resignation, alienation.</li> <li>• Lack of hope, lack of trust in others.</li> <li>• Suspicion, disillusion.</li> <li>• Low performance.</li> <li>• Interpersonal conflicts, absenteeism, and exhaustion.</li> </ul>	Stanley, Meyer, and Topolnytsky (2005)
<b>Resignation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel they have lost control over a situation and as a result have accepted the current state of affairs.</li> <li>• Result of sustained or continual change processes.</li> <li>• Past experiences can influence an individual's current expectations of their ability to influence a situation (self-efficacy).</li> <li>• Helpless person expects that active behavior will have no effect on the outcome.</li> <li>• The impairment that learned helplessness has on negative learning processes.</li> <li>• Feelings of helplessness, sadness, hopelessness and even fear can take over when one believes that their actions are futile, and they are at the mercy of the world.</li> <li>• Perceived loss of control, security, or status.</li> <li>• Fear of failure.</li> </ul>	Scheier, Weintraub, and Carver (1986); Abramson, Seligman, and Teasdale (1978); Barysch (2016); Seligman, Petermann, and Rockstroh (1979); Dempsey et al. (2021)
<b>Value system</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization may have different views on the values being promoted can create tension and further complicate the process of change.</li> </ul>	Marginson (2009)

**Table 3.** Categorization of possible antidotes to organizational change failure and success factors.

Success category	Description	Source
<b>Good management and leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for effective communication.</li> <li>• Need for effective leadership.</li> <li>• Importance of teamwork.</li> <li>• Need to involve employees and managers.</li> <li>• Importance of culture.</li> <li>• Involve other stakeholders more.</li> <li>• Need resources, stick to a systematic approach.</li> <li>• Communication, goals, processes and giving orientation.</li> <li>• Create a vision/change message.</li> <li>• Communicate it throughout the organization.</li> </ul>	Jones, Firth, Hannibal, and Ogunseyin (2019); Dempsey et al. (2021)
<b>Functional organizational culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of culture.</li> </ul>	Jones, Firth, Hannibal, and Ogunseyin (2019)
<b>Active participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early adequate, active participation of all individuals/groups affected.</li> </ul>	Dempsey et al. (2021)
<b>Systematic change process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a sense of urgency.</li> <li>• Developing a clear vision.</li> <li>• Communicating the vision.</li> <li>• Removing obstacles.</li> <li>• Creating short-term wins.</li> <li>• Aligning structures, systems, structures and policies.</li> <li>• Anchoring changes.</li> <li>• Firmly in the corporate success and corporate culture.</li> <li>• Building a powerful support base.</li> </ul>	Kotter (1995, 2012); Rosenberg and Mosca (2011)
<b>Value system</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting a new set of values, they can use the concept of “purpose” to control and influence organizational change.</li> </ul>	Marginson (2009)



**Figure 1.** Provides the theoretical framework to investigate the topic under study.



their environment. The theory suggests that successful change is dependent on the balance of both positive and negative driving and restraining forces in a leader's change space. The environment and context must be considered to ensure a successful transition, and leaders must ensure that there are clear expectations and goals to be met by their employees. This would provide a sense of autonomy and competence, which would then be supported by the relatedness of colleagues. Therefore, the basic psychological needs theory of autonomy, competence and relatedness provides a useful framework to underpin Kurt Lewin's Field Theory to better understand leader's change behavior. Through understanding the importance of emotional forces, the need for leaders to feel secure in their environment, and the value of proper communication between leaders and employees, organizations can better equip themselves to change successfully.

The Rite of Passage Model describes how rituals and ceremonies have been used in promoting organizational change, to create a shared identity and a feeling of belonging as well as communication and understanding between participants of the change event. These interpretations suggest that the rites of passage model might be seen as addressing all three of the basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Rites of passage can offer a structure that provides leaders with a sense of autonomy. It can offer a space for transformation and transition allowing leaders to explore different identities and roles without judgment or prejudice. With this type of structure, leaders are given the opportunity to choose how they will define themselves and engage in a process of self-actualization. Additionally, rites of passage can offer a platform for leaders to demonstrate their capabilities and expertise within a community. By participating in these rituals and ceremonies, leaders can present their competence and share their knowledge with other members of the change community. Finally, rites of passage can also provide an environment where leaders can deepen their relationships and feel connected to each other. *Communitas* is a concept that emphasizes equality and mutual respect for each participant of the change event and can be expressed through rituals and collective activities. By creating such a sense of connectedness and by celebrating shared need-based experiences and memories, leaders can form meaningful relationships with other members of the change team.

Overall, the concept of rites of passage appears to best address the basic psychological need of relatedness. These rituals and ceremonies, which serve to mark transitions between different stages of change and states of existence, offer leaders the opportunity to form meaningful connections within a shared community. They can help to create a sense of equality and a feeling of belonging that supports the needs of these new relationships. As such, relatedness appears to be the basic psychological need that is best addressed through rites of passage model.

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1. Qualitative Research Methodology in Leadership Research**

Qualitative research has become an essential tool in understanding leadership

within organizational change (Bryman, 2017; Conger, 1998) as it can provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complexities of leadership experiences (Lanka, Lanka, Rostron, & Singh, 2020; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). It has been used to examine partly unexpected phenomena, such as organizational change failure (Insch, Moore, & Murphy, 1997), capture individualistic nuances of leader's behavior and decisions during change (Bryman, 2004), and introduce a wider range of contextual variables (external influencing factors of change) (Bryman, Bresnen, Beardsworth, & Keil, 1988), into the investigation of leadership and organizational change failure. Qualitative research also has the potential to provide a more grounded perspective, as it relies on leader's experiences and is more accessible to researcher (Klenke, 2016). Additionally, it has been used to examine the process of change events over time (Bryman, Stephens, & à Campo, 1996), providing researchers with valuable insight and understanding of failure or success of organizational change and its underlying mechanisms. Therefore, for the present study, a qualitative research approach was chosen due to its ability to provide a more comprehensive and better understanding of leader's failure or success in organizational change.

#### 4.2. Sample

This study has examined the characteristics that are commonly found among leaders. 92 leaders have participated in the study and 46 have been selected for data gathering, because they have finished the entire questionnaire. The data in **Table 4** show the study sample on four socio-demographic characteristics as follows: sex, age, education level, and four role-specific characteristics, such as length of experience, hierarchical leadership level, area of responsibility, and the manager-to-employee ratio.

**Table 4.** Socio-demographic and role-specific characteristics of the study sample.

Socio-demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	
<b>Sex</b>	Female	15	32.6%
	Male	29	63.00
	Diverse	1	2.2%
	Not indicated	1	2.2%
	Total	46	
<b>Age</b>	<30	18	39.1%
	31 - 40	16	34.8%
	41 - 50	9	19.6%
	51 - 60	2	4.3%
	>60	0	0%
	Not indicated	1	2.2%
Total	46		

**Continued**

	Ph.D./Dr.	2	4.3%
	Master	13	28.3%
	Bachelor	14	30.4%
<b>Education</b>	Diploma	2	4.3%
	Magister	3	6.5%
	High-school (German Abitur)	6	13.0%
	Others	5	10.8%
	Total	46	
	<1 year	7	15.2%
	1 - 3 years	26	56.5%
<b>Leaders' length of experience</b>	4 - 5	7	15.2%
	6 - 10	3	6.5%
	>10	3	6.5%
	total	46	
	Top management	2	4.3%
	Middle management	16	34.8%
<b>Hierarchical leadership level</b>	Head of department	8	17.4%
	Team manager	18	39.1%
	Not indicated	2	4.3%
	Total	46	
	Organisation	10	21.7%
	Business unit	6	13.0%
<b>Area of responsibility</b>	Team	29	63.0%
	Not indicated	1	2.2%
	Total	46	
	<5	12	26.1%
	5 - 10	19	41.3%
<b>Manager-to-employee ratio</b>	11 - 20	7	15.2%
	21 - 50	6	13.0%
	>50	2	4.3%
	Total	46	

The patterns that are visible are that most of the participants have been male (63%) and between the ages of 31 and 40 (34.8%). A large proportion of the participants (60.9%) have been mainly active in a German-speaking cultural circle and have had a bachelor’s or master’s degree (58.7%). Experience as a manager has been between 1 and 3 years for most participants (56.5%), while most (63%) have had team responsibility. Most participants have led less than 10 employees (57.6%). Regarding the cultural living background, the sample is diverse.

### 4.3. Codebook

Based on the literature review, aim of the study and the theoretical framework, a code book has been developed (Boyatzis, 1998; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This codebook has been expanded into a coding memorandum, whereby each code has a label; and a description of qualifiers and an example of a positive and a negative leader’s experience. The code book has been divided into the three theoretical models of change integrated into the theoretical framework.

The code scheme for Kurt Lewin’s field theory model has been categorized into personal influencing factors (Table 5), situational influencing factors (Table 6), and decisional influencing factors (Table 7). The personal influencing factors have been coded by these categories: motivation level, personal values and expectations, and social status.

**Table 5.** Personal influencing factors.

Category	Description	Example
<b>Motivation level</b>	Degree of motivation as the sum of all conscious and unconscious motives (driving forces) for everything a person strives for.	<p>“The challenges that came with the change included finding new ways to communicate effectively with team members, managing issues related to isolation and distractions, and making sure everyone remained motivated and engaged despite the change.”</p> <p>“There was also resistance to the change and the need to motivate and engage employees in order to successfully implement the change.”</p>
<b>Personal values and expectations</b>	Values are general objectives. Expectations are ideas, assumptions or desires of how something or someone should be in the future.	<p>“As a manager, I have always tried to let employees see the advantages of the change.”</p> <p>“When I relied on others for my purposes, I experienced a combined reaction from them. Some of them criticized me for my laziness and I was hurt by the negative criticism.”</p>
<b>Social status</b>	Social status describes the effective assignment of a social position in a system of social, i.e. socially inscribed and historically grown hierarchies and hierarchies.	<p>“I was given the responsibility of managing the implementation of Artificial Intelligence in my department.”</p> <p>“It’s difficult to lead a team as a manager if you’ve worked with the same people at a lower level before.”</p>

**Table 6.** Situational influencing factors.

Category	Description	Example
<b>Influence by general atmosphere</b>	Atmosphere is called mood or aura in phenomenology. It is a subjective mood that is conveyed socially and by the external environment, or an objective characteristic of an environment that cannot be traced back to a single object alone, but to the way in which that environment is composed.	<p>“The team responded well, as they were in a vulnerable state after losing their manager and an older colleague in the same month.”</p> <p>“Some employees are increasingly stressed, more working hours, more work.”</p>
<b>Influence of other people</b>	Social influence is the change of opinions, attitudes and behavior through the influence of other people or groups.	<p>“We had to make sure that we involved everyone in the company to ensure the implementation of the change.”</p> <p>“I had to deal with a number of long-standing cooperation partners who had gotten into financial difficulties and wanted to jump ship.”</p>
<b>Influence of adapted and new structures, processes, and rules (and social norms derived from them)</b>	<p>Social norms are concrete instructions for action that affect social behavior. They define responsible social action in situations of everyday life and work.</p> <p>There are norms that must be followed (laws), others that should be followed rules that determine (exactly) which actions (in certain situations) are prohibited or required and what is permitted political, economic, socio-cultural, technological, ecological-geographical, and legal environmental influences.</p>	<p>“It was about meeting and getting to know a lot of new people and getting used to new rules.”</p> <p>“I had to move to a different team, a new office, and a different type of workload.”</p>
<b>Support from others</b>	Social support, as a sub-area of social networks, can have a direct effect on psychological well-being, alleviate stress, but also mitigate the effects of unfavorable living conditions.	<p>“My colleagues and superiors understood the situation and my research institution was willing to help me financially until I found another source of funding.”</p> <p>“The biggest challenge, however, was to implement the new model without impacting ongoing operations, while ensuring that all stakeholders were familiarized with the new processes and responsibilities.”</p>

The situational influencing factors have been categorized with aspects such as influence by general atmosphere, influence of other people, influence of adapted and new structures, processes and rules (and social norms derived from them), and support from others.

Decisional influencing factors have been identified by the following categories: balancing opportunities and risks, evaluating results in relation to reference points, being willing to act with a high level of motivation, and comparing alternatives based on losses/gains.

**Table 7.** Decisional influencing factors.

Category	Description	Example
<b>Balancing opportunities and risks</b>	The analysis of opportunities and threats (risks) is a task in the preparation of business decisions and is necessary to be able to weigh up the expected returns from them against the risks (risk-appropriate evaluation of options for action, such as investments).	“Identification of possible solutions or options for action. Assessing the pros and cons of each potential solution or course of action.” “Under the given conditions, there was not much leeway as to which decisions could be made, but only who they affected and when.”
<b>Evaluation of results in relation to reference points</b>	The benefit to the decision-maker is not measured by the absolute benefit. It refers to a reference point and the change to that reference point. Losses are weighted more heavily than profits due to the emotions that arise compared to profits. In the loss area, the behavior of individuals is also much more willing to take risks than in the profit area.	“However, the biggest challenge was to implement the new model without affecting ongoing operations.” “I was in a situation where I was supposed to live a completely different life, because the home office was introduced for an indefinite period of time.” “Triggered by the Corona crisis, there was a fundamental rethinking among the workforce on the subject of remote working and home office.”
<b>Willingness to act with a high level of motivation</b>	The willingness to act describes the motivation to perform a certain action. It is influenced by internal and external factors and is therefore a control regulator for the execution of actions. The willingness to act is influenced by endogenous (internal) and exogenous (external) factors: internal factors emanate from the individual. Possible internal influencing factors are, for example, hunger, thirst, fatigue, age, illness or injury, but also the hormonal situation and experiences of the living being. External influencing factors are dictated by the environment. Examples of exogenous factors are food supply, weather, temperature, competition or brightness.	“I had to support them as much as I could during this transition and help them adapt.” “I found out in a phone conversation with my manager, he had also just found out from his manager and, like me, didn’t agree with it, but we can’t do anything about it.”
<b>Comparison of alternatives based on losses/gains</b>	Losses are weighted more heavily than profits due to the emotions that arise compared to profits. In the loss area, the behavior of individuals is also much more willing to take risks than in the profit area. Possible environmental states are not weighted by their objective probabilities of occurrence, but by means of a probability weighting function. This tends to assign too much weight to extremely unlikely events and too little weight to almost certain events.	“Overall, the shift to remote work presented significant challenges, but it also provided an opportunity for managers and employees to develop new skills and strategies that will be valuable in the future.” “Challenge: team members spread over different projects with different divisions to how much % they are assigned to the respective projects. Part-time/full-time differences, face-to-face projects & remote work.”

## Continued

<b>Balancing and reflection</b>	Reflection is the turning of thought and consciousness back to oneself. In general, reflection describes the tendency to become inward, and if it relates to thinking, a form of metacognition, i.e. the pursuit of knowledge about one's own knowledge. Reflection also describes the ability to perceive one's own behavior, mental concepts, feelings and attitudes and to critically question them in relation to the environment and is therefore a necessary prerequisite for learning from experiences, before, during or especially after an event. Through independent reflection, but also carried out together with others, a more differentiated understanding of the self, the other or the situation can emerge.	"I also consulted intensively with the people involved to take into account different perspectives and expertise." "Power word only in case of emergency. Had a learning curve: just tackling a few things."
<b>Motivation and volition</b>	Motivation is the desire to do something; volition is the absolute commitment to achieving something.	"I never feel like I have to give up because that's part of my job." "I never felt like giving up." "I felt demotivated and wondered if the change was really worth the effort."
<b>Implementation (interest in planning)</b>	A plan addressing how to complete a change stage in a certain timeframe, usually with defined stages and designated resources.	"I systematically searched for sources of funding, found a few suitable ones and submitted projects everywhere. One thing worked." "It was a lot of jumping upside down and hoping for the best."

The Van Gennep's Rite of Passage Model has been labeled by different categories.

Van Gennep's Rite of Passage Model has been detected by the following categories: accompaniment, communitas, sense of security, and rituals. **Table 8** shows the categories with a short description and code examples.

#### 4.4. Data Collection Methods

This research has used an online survey which has been constructed based on a self-administered semi-structured interview questionnaire (Burgess, 2001; Kasunic, 2005), provided via <https://www.umfrageonline.com/> (Lumsden & Morgan, 2005). Participants have been told they can take a break or reject whenever they want.

The survey has had two sections. The first part has included an introduction, demographic data such as gender, age, educational background, date of leadership experiences, hierarchical level, areas of responsibility and manager-to-employee ratio, plus two open-ended questions. The open-ended questions have allowed participants to respond freely, reducing the risk of bias from pre-set answer options (Reja, Manfreda, Hlebec, & Vehovar, 2003).

**Table 8.** Category system of van Gennep’s Rite of Passage Model.

Category	Description	Example
<b>Accompaniment</b>	Experiencing support during the change process and feeling “in good hands”.	<p>“My new team welcomed me and I had support from top management.”</p> <p>“This is where most of the problems developed, because the motivation was not there from the team.”</p>
<b>Communitas</b>	Communitas is a group of people regardless of their status, that all are of equal worth; and that all should be treated with respect and dignity. “Communitas” as an unstructured and mainly undifferentiated group of “equal”. Such liminal participants feel themselves as one entity grouped by the liminal phase.	<p>“I had confidence in my team, everyone stuck together well and welcomed the new employee well.”</p> <p>“In terms of belonging and inclusion, I felt disconnected from my team members and colleagues during the transition to remote work.”</p>
<b>Sense of security</b>	The environment in which the change took place was safe and pleasant for me.	<p>“I had a stronger sense of security because I knew that this change was important for my personal growth and development.”</p> <p>“In the face of the change, I did not feel safe as there was a lot of ambiguity.”</p>
<b>Rituals</b>	A ritual is a predetermined rule, usually formal and often solemn-festive act with symbolic content and is often accompanied by certain word formulas and fixed gestures. Rituals also have numerous functions on a social level, because they can indicate social structures, such as who belongs to a family, a club or a company and who does not.	<p>“A joint team meeting on Wednesdays with lunch afterwards.”</p> <p>“No, it was simply decided without us.”</p>

The open-ended questions have focused on the leaders’ experience in the context of organizational change and thematized aspects of the conceptual framework:

Lewin’s field theory model:

- 1) Choose one of your recently experienced important changes and describe the change in your own words (trigger, goal, framework conditions, participants, challenges).
- 2) Describe the situation in which you found yourself during the change (environment, problems, framework conditions, participants, relationships).
- 3) How did you make important decisions during the change? How did you proceed?
- 4) If you think about the course of the change, did you follow a systematic plan? Describe your approach.
- 5) How often did you feel like giving up or persisting during the change? Describe an example.



Van Gennep's Rite of Passage Model:

- 1) How did you experience the change in terms of feelings such as security, belonging, being included, and solidarity?
- 2) Was the change "embodied" through symbols and/or joint activities (e.g. a kind of rituals)? If yes, how? (Otherwise enter "no")

#### 4.5. Data Analysis Methods

Qualitative content analysis is an empirical, methodological controlled approach of analyzing texts within its context (Mayring, 2004). The process of qualitative content analysis begins with formulating theoretical aspects of analysis that will be brought in connection with the text.

For this study, it relies on deductive category application, in which a passage of text can be assigned to a pre-defined category based on a conceptual framework from literature review and selecting appropriate theories (change models) for the topic of the study (Fenzl & Mayring, 2017; Insch, Moore, & Murphy, 1997). To ensure accuracy, explicit definitions, examples, and coding rules can be provided for each deductive category. These definitions are compiled into a coding agenda (Roller, 2019). A derived codebook contains the category names and short definitions (Mayring, 2015, 2021). This method reduces the potential of researcher biases (Insch, Moore, & Murphy, 1997). Additionally, the process of coding and interpreting the data is also designed to minimize bias, as it allows the researcher to consider the context of the material and evaluate the coded data by existing theoretical assumptions from the used change models (Insch, Moore, & Murphy, 1997).

The process of data analyzing is broken down into four main stages: 1) decontextualization, 2) recontextualization, 3) categorization, and 4) compilation (Bengtsson, 2016; Insch, Moore, & Murphy, 1997):

- 1) The first stage, decontextualization, involves becoming familiar with the data and breaking it down into smaller meaning units, which can then be labeled with codes based on a pre-existing coding scheme derived from literature review and conceptual frameworks. A computer program QCAmap supports the coding process.

- 2) The second stage, recontextualization, involves re-reading the original text alongside the list of meaning units to ensure that all aspects of the content have been covered in relation to the research question.

- 3) The third stage, categorization, involves condensing extended meaning units and identifying themes and categories based on the coding scheme. The researcher moves meaning units back and forth between categories to generate the best possible outcome.

- 4) The fourth and final stage, compilation, is the process of writing up the analysis and drawing conclusions. In a latent analysis, the researcher immerses himself in the data to identify hidden meanings and find underlying mechanisms. Once the categories are established, the researcher creates a summary of the themes, categories, and sub-categories as a table. Finally, the researcher per-

forms an expert check (2 leaders, 2 leadership consultants) to validate the outcome and strengthen the validity of the study.

#### **4.6. Criteria for Evaluating the Trustworthiness and Validity of Qualitative Research**

To ensure the quality of qualitative research and the validity of its results, it is important to evaluate the trustworthiness of the research. Key criteria for evaluating the trustworthiness of qualitative research, ways to assess the validity, and processes for how to ensure clear exposition of methods of data collection and analysis are discussed.

Applied criteria for evaluating the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Kitto, Chesters, & Grbich, 2008; Mays & Pope, 2020; Stenfors, Kajamaa, & Bennett, 2020) include:

- Credibility refers to the plausibility and trustworthiness of the research findings. To ensure these qualities, research must align theory, research question, data collection, analysis and results and must use an appropriate sampling strategy, with the depth and volume of data and the appropriate analytical steps.
- Dependability refers to the extent to which the research could be replicated in similar conditions. To ensure dependability, researchers must provide sufficient information for another researcher to follow the same procedure, although possible different conclusions can result.
- Confirmability is the link or relationship between the data and the findings. Researchers must provide detailed descriptions and the use of quotes to demonstrate how they make their findings.
- Transferability refers to the ability to transfer the findings to another setting, context, or group. This requires detailed descriptions of the context in which research is being conducted and how it shapes the findings.
- Reflexivity is a continual process of engaging with and articulating the place of the researcher and the context of the research. To ensure reflexivity, researchers must explain how reflexivity was embedded and supported in the research process.

In addition to the criteria for evaluating the trustworthiness of qualitative research, it is also important to assess the validity of qualitative research (Kitto, Chesters, & Grbich, 2008; Mays & Pope, 2020; Stenfors, Kajamaa, & Bennett, 2020).

To confirm the validity of this study, a comprehensive research technique is employed. This involves both a narrative literature review and a theoretical framework to evaluate the occurrence of leader's failure and success in organizational change. Snowball sampling is employed to collect data from 46 participants with a wide range of leadership background and interpretations of their experience in multi-crisis organizational change context. A transparent vision of the research questions is established, and the theoretical framework is designed to be flexible for any new directions. The data collection instrument is con-

structured cautiously to avoid being overwhelmed by the volume of data obtained. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions are carried out and then coded and checked by two other leadership experts. Data analysis by qualitative content analysis focuses on detecting concealed patterns and reconstructing the experience of the leaders. The findings are then placed into context and supported by the related literature and theoretical triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2002).

## 5. Findings

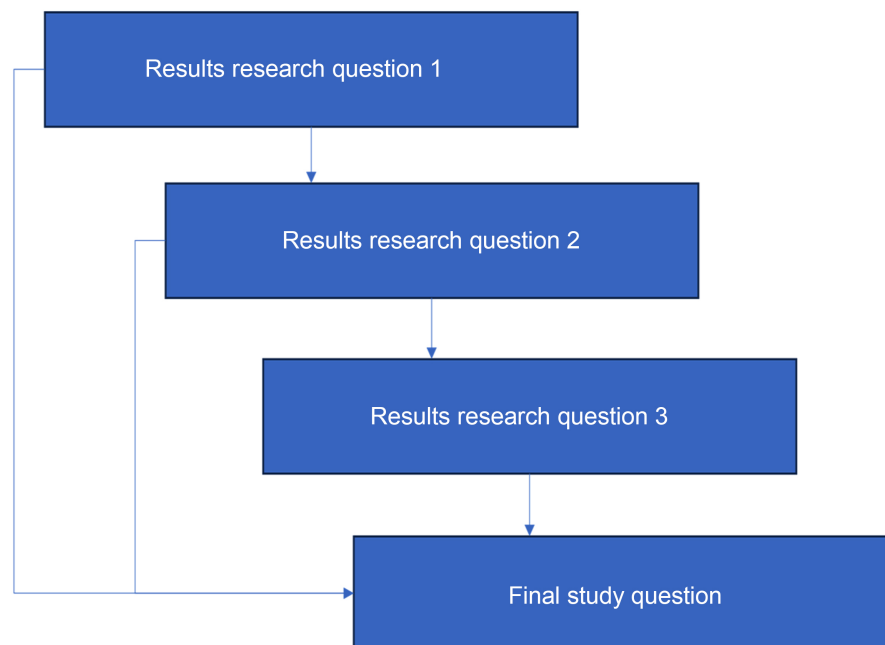
The gathered data have been investigated to provide answers to the three designed research questions and achieve the aim of the study:

- 1) What are the positive and negative experiences of leaders of organizational change in a multi-crisis context?
- 2) Which success and failure factors influence leaders' behavior when managing organizational change in a multi-crisis context?
- 3) What are the basic psychological needs of leaders within organizational change in a multi-crisis context?

The answers to the research questions build upon each other, so the results from the first research question are used as data for addressing the second research question and its results are analyzed in the third research question (see **Figure 2**).

Conclusions drawn from Research Questions 1 - 3 are used to address the final question of this study.

The findings to the question: "What are the positive and negative change experiences of leaders in a multi-crisis context?" have been presented.



**Figure 2.** Logic of related data processing to reach aim of the study.

## 5.1. Research Question 1: What Are the Positive and Negative Change Experiences of Leaders of Organizational Change in a Multi-Crisis Context?

Kurt Lewin's field theory model has been divided into personal, situational, and decisional influencing factors. In the context of a multi-crisis situation, the impact of the leader's positive and negative experiences when managing change has been discussed.

### 5.1.1. Personal Influencing Factors

The leader's change experiences have reflected various personal influencing factors. Motivation level has played a major role in how people make decisions regarding change. Depending on someone's personal values and expectations that have been shaped by their social status, they have been more likely to try something new or resist change.

Positive and negative experiences have been divided in motivation level, personal values and expectations and social status and presented with examples in quotes of the gathered and coded data:

Positive experience

- Motivation level: Stay motivated and engaged through new ways of communicating despite isolation and distraction (Example: "The challenges that came with the change included finding new ways to communicate effectively with team members, managing issues related to isolation and distractions, and making sure everyone remained motivated and engaged despite the change."); demonstrate the benefits of change (Example: "As a manager, I have always tried to let employees see the advantages of the change."); shaping change in a positive way (Example: "I tried to make it positive and implement the change in the best possible way.").
- Personal values and expectations: Open and transparent communication (Example: "It was also important to keep communication open and transparent to keep all stakeholders informed and address concerns."); feel comfortable and be able to integrate (Example: "I wanted to make sure he felt comfortable and integrated well."); change is part of life (Example: "Change is part of life."); look for challenges (Example: "I can't imagine not looking for new challenges."); dealing with people is based on reciprocity (Example: "It is always good to deal with people, don't get used to it, that's how I am.").
- Social status: Received promotion (Example: "I was promoted to middle management position and changed jobs."); responsibility extended (Example: "I was given the responsibility of managing the implementation of Artificial Intelligence in my department.", "I'm now in charge of a team of project managers working on different projects."); receive respect (Example: "I won the respect of my protégés and new aspirations."); promises made (Example: "I promised employees that the changes would ease the workload."); my experience counts (Example: "I was the most experienced in the unit."); caring for others (Example: "My team members were interns with little or no know-

ledge.”).

Negative experience

- Motivation level: Resistance to change leads to the need to actively promote motivation and engagement (Example: “There was also resistance to the change and the need to motivate and engage employees in order to successfully implement the change.”); despite lack of experience, he is confronted with many tasks (Example: “I was immediately confronted with a team of young professionals, interns and many tasks in an area for which I am only theoretically prepared.”); skepticism (Example: “I guess I was skeptical.”); team dynamics damaged (Example: “I would say that it has damaged the team dynamic.”).
- Personal values and expectations: Resistance to change leads to the need to actively promote motivation and engagement (Example: “There was also resistance to the change and the need to motivate and engage employees in order to successfully implement the change.”); despite a lack of experience, he is confronted with many tasks (Example: “I was immediately confronted with a team of young professionals, interns and many tasks in an area for which I am only theoretically prepared.”); moral dilemma leads to stress (Example: “Which caused me a lot of stress myself, because I knew exactly that she wouldn’t change anything for the management positions, but then our smallest worker with a lower income would have to suffer anyway.”); be externally determined (Example: “The trigger was extra work for the 2nd aspect, although it doesn’t make sense to us.” But the boss wouldn’t allow me to do that.”); fear of loss (Example: “And then you see a lot of things you’ve worked hard for, a little bit perishing.”).
- Social status: Reorganization leads to team downsizing (Example: “A reorganization in the company means that I have relinquished an aspect. My team is also smaller.”); difficult relationships with colleagues (Example: “I didn’t have a good relationship with most of the team, even though I’d known them for years in the business.”, “It’s difficult to lead a team as a manager if you’ve worked with the same people at a lower level before.”); high pressure of expectation (Example: “There was a lot of pressure to deliver, and I was just learning the practical aspect of the tasks.”).

### 5.1.2. Situational Influencing Factors

The leader’s experience of change has been influenced by situational factors, e.g. stimuli, pressures, conditions.

Positive and negative experiences have been divided in influence by general atmosphere, influence of other people, influence of adapted and new structures, processes, and rules (and social norms derived from them), and support from others (see also table and category system) and presented with examples in quotes of the gathered and coded data.

Positive experience

- Positive experiences of the general atmosphere include a convivial relation-

ship in the new workplace, adapting quickly to change, finding new ways to keep team members productive and engaged, and raising the standard of living. For example, “My new workplace is a shared office (unlike my old one, where I was often alone)” (Conviviality in the new workplace), “The team responded well, as they were in a vulnerable state after losing their manager and an older colleague in the same month.” (Adapt quickly to change), “Managers needed to find new ways to support their team members and make sure they were productive and engaged.” (Finding new ways to keep team members productive and engaged), and “Normal. There is nothing to complain about, you have to work to constantly raise the standard of living.” (Raising the standard of living).

- Positive influence from other people includes the involvement and collaboration of all stakeholders, the addition of new employees for IT, adaptation to the new way of working, the takeover of the company by others, and the training for career paths. For example, “We had to make sure that we involved everyone in the company to ensure the implementation of the change.” (Involve and involve all stakeholders), “New employees have joined because we urgently needed new qualified personnel in our IT department.” (New employees for IT), “As the manager of a small team, I was responsible for ensuring that team members could work effectively from home, as well as the employees themselves, who had to adapt to the new way of working.” (Adaptation to the new way of working), “Our company was taken over or bought by another company.” (Takeover of the company by others), and “After this time, I received an offer to train as a production manager.” (Training for career paths).
- Positive experiences of adapted and new structures, processes, and rules (and social norms that come from them) include the adaptation of team culture to the new rules, face-to-face meetings in the office have been introduced, the adaptation of the project management framework and culture, maintaining competitiveness by optimizing business processes, and COVID enforced social distancing to contain the virus. For example, “It was about meeting and getting to know a lot of new people and getting used to new rules.” (Adapt team culture to new rules), “For our department, face-to-face team days have been introduced, in which we now all meet regularly around the office (for the first time since the beginning of Corona).” (Face-to-face meetings in the office have been introduced), “The change would entail significant changes to the project management framework and culture of the company.” (Adaptation of the project management framework and culture), “The organization in which I work as a manager has decided to optimize and digitize its business processes in order to remain competitive.” (Maintain competitiveness by optimizing business processes), and “The change undergone was the transition to remote work triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for social distancing to prevent the spread of the virus.” (COVID enforced social

distancing to contain the virus).

- Finally, support from others includes understanding and support from stakeholders, employee participation, and getting external support. For example, “My colleagues and superiors understood the situation and my research institution was willing to help me financially until I found another source of funding.” (Understanding and support from stakeholders), “The most involved was my employee, who until then had been paid by the Russian grant.” (Employee participation), and “For one of the projects, know-how had to be built up in-house, and we were supported by an external company.” (Getting external support).

#### Negative experience

- Negative experiences of the general atmosphere include economic change, changes in the workflow, loss of friendly relations, and deterioration of the working atmosphere. For example, “economic change, loss of orders.” (Economic change), “Some employees are increasingly stressed, more working hours, more work.” (Changes in the workflow), “the friendly relationship with the employees had been somewhat lost.” (Loss of friendly relations), and “As a result, the working atmosphere has deteriorated.” (Deterioration of the working atmosphere).
- Negative influence from other people includes financial difficulties for long-term cooperation partners, many different departments making communication and coordination difficult, finding an employee replacement, bad relations with the team, and a boss refusing to work from home. For example, “From the management’s point of view, this happened at a time of extreme financial uncertainty.”, “I had to deal with a number of long-standing cooperation partners who had gotten into financial difficulties and wanted to jump ship.” (Financial difficulties for long-term cooperation partners), “Many different departments and teams were involved, which made communication and coordination difficult.” (Many different departments making communication and coordination difficult), “An employee of ours has resigned. Nobody expected it, as he played a key role. It was a big challenge to find someone to replace him.” (Finding an employee replacement), “I didn’t have a good relationship with most of the team, even though I’d known them for years in the business.” (Bad relations with the team), and “I wanted to work from home like all my colleagues. Aber der Chef wollte nicht mir das erlauben.” (Boss refusing to work from home).
- Negative experiences of adaptations and new structures, processes and rules (and social norms that come from them) include standing up for others and getting criticized, having to adopt an attitude of justification, bottleneck time leading to the accusation of “no time for us”, many people experiencing big changes due to COVID, a new work context and different type of workload, changes due to staff reduction, problems with the implementation of a project, and employee uncertainty and worry. For example, “When I relied on others

for my purposes, I experienced a combined reaction from them. Some of them criticized me for my laziness and I was hurt by the negative criticism.” (Standing up for others and getting criticized), “I had to justify very quickly everything that had been built and why.” (Having to adopt an attitude of justification), “Problems: Time allocation is not trivial, because you always have the feeling that you are neglecting the other areas and sometimes get accusations of not having enough time/being tangible/being reliable.” (Bottleneck time leading to the accusation of “no time for us”), “In general, when there is a big change, it affects many people, such as our company. That change was COVID.” (Many people experiencing big changes due to COVID), “I had to move to a different team, a new office, and a different type of workload.” (A new work context and different type of workload), “The change came about because another colleague left the company, and they didn’t replace him.” (Changes due to staff reduction), “We were struggling to complete the project with my team, there wasn’t much time to implement it. The main problems were that we had to organize more expertise for a particular project.” (Problems with the implementation of a project), and “The environment was characterized by uncertainty and unrest, as many employees viewed change with concern.” (Employee uncertainty and worry).

### 5.1.3. Decisional Influencing Factors

Decision making factors were based on the concept of valence as the value of an “object” (change goal, need) for the person at a particular time and have been described as process factors of how to decide.

Positive and negative experiences have been classified in influence by balancing opportunities and risks, evaluation of results in relation to reference points, willingness to act with a high level of motivation, comparison of alternatives based on losses/gains, balancing and reflection, motivation and volition, and Implementation (interest in planning) (see also table and category system) and have been presented with examples in quotes of the gathered and coded data.

Positive experience

- The idea of balancing opportunities and risks has been a positive experience for many. This can be seen from the examples of risk-taking that have been mentioned, such as, “I did it by allowing myself to take a risk, believing that I could succeed” and “avoiding a problematic decision”. The task of making informed decisions is best accomplished by weighing out the pros and cons, which is exemplified by statements such as, “Assessing the pros and cons of each potential solution or course of action”.
- When it comes to transitioning to a new system or organization, the necessary evaluations and comparisons between the different alternatives arise. Introducing futureproofing through agile organizations can be a major step in the right direction, as is emphasized by, “The goal was to create a more agile



and flexible organization in order to better meet the challenges of the future”. Moreover, the willingness to act with a high level of motivation is necessary for successful implementations, as highlighted by, “Active support and help with adaptation”, and “Spontaneous problem solving”. Finally, recognizing both sides of change, being flexible in adapting to new circumstances, and managing risks consciously are all ways to have a positive experience when going through a transition process. These ideas are reinforced by quotes such as, “Change has two sides, which are positive and negative”, and “I did it by allowing myself to take a risk, believing that I could succeed”.

- Balancing and reflecting on potential outcomes is also essential to success. This is illustrated by statements such as, “Consulted with my direct supervisor”, and “I consulted intensively with the people involved to take into account different perspectives and expertise”. The need for being adaptive and flexible in uncertain situations is also evident, as is evidenced by, “The ability to be flexible and adapt to changing circumstances is the key to the success of the change”. Additionally, a willingness to not give up is also important, as manifested by phrases such as, “I never feel like I have to give up because that’s part of my job”, and “I couldn’t give up because my employees rely on me”.
- Finally, the success of an implementation depends on the interests, planning, and systematic approach taken by the individuals involved. Proper analysis and research should always be considered, such as, “I did a lot of research, consulted and based my decisions on facts and figures”. Additionally, close coordination with stakeholders and feedback from them is also important, as evidenced by phrases like, “Close consultations with the supervisor, always listening to all sides what you are missing and how to counter it”, and, “I have told the technicians of the company, who helped us, asked a lot of questions and tried to do the tasks they gave me”. Finally, it is important that decisions be taken with alignment to what is possible, which has been demonstrated through expressions like, “I have reacted to a change of plan and implemented it consistently in my work”, and, “I have adhered to the guidelines, during the change I have made important decisions based on data and facts”.

#### Negative experience

- Balancing opportunities and risks are an important aspect of managing change. In many cases, it can be a challenging process as there is often no room for maneuver in terms of which decisions to make and who they will affect and when. This is illustrated by the example: “Under the given conditions, there was not much leeway as to which decisions could be made, but only who they affected and when”. Rapid adaptation to technological and organizational changes, such as the sudden shift to remote working due to the Corona crisis, can also be a challenging experience. This is demonstrated in the statement: “This required managers and employees to adapt quickly to new technologies

and ways of working, which could be challenging for some”.

- Time pressure can also be a challenging factor when managing change. It can mean having to make decisions quickly or make sure deadlines are met, such as a statement of “Having to make it in time”. This can be particularly difficult if an organization is not prepared for change and renovation is expensive, as illustrated by the example: “Our hotel is in a small town and is starting to get a bit dated. The chain decided that a renovation would be too expensive for a hotel that didn’t have the right location”. This can be further intensified when staff resignations create moral dilemmas, as pointed out in the comment “Since I had known the employee for a very long time and also helped him privately, it was very difficult to inform him of the dismissal”.
- Furthermore, it can be difficult to act with a high degree of motivation during times of change. This is often due to feeling a lack of control or a fear of not understanding the new system, illustrated through the statement: “[everyone was] afraid that they would not be able to cope with the new system”. Financial challenges can further complicate the situation, such as the example of “Reorientation in research and raising new funds to pay my employees”.
- Finally, decisions and choices made during times of change must often involve comparisons of different alternatives based on losses or gains. This can create significant ambiguities, such as those presented in the example of “[challenges with] team members spread over different projects with different divisions to how much % they are assigned to the respective projects”. It can also be a result of heteronomy, as is demonstrated in the statements “[having] to implement other people’s decisions” or “Making decisions for others while your own existence is also threatened is not easy”.
- Balancing and reflection during times of change is also important, as it can involve complying with regulations, such as the example of “In accordance with the relevant operating regulations”. This process can also involve dealing with potentially problematic decisions, as highlighted through the comment “Under the given conditions, there was not much leeway as to which decisions could be made, but only who they affected and when”. Additionally, it may also mean responding to customer demands, as stated in the example of “I didn’t have much choice in this matter, as the customer was an important source of our business”.
- Motivation and volition during times of change often involve being unmotivated, as can be seen through the examples of “I felt demotivated and wondered if the change was really worth the effort” and “I started to feel a little helpless, thinking that they were unfairly targeted this week due to the company’s bad trading”. This can lead to resignation and frustration, such as “I thought about quitting my job” and “I often had to give up the thought related to the diss”. The “now more than ever” attitude and a lack of recognition for ideas and efforts can further aggravate this situation, as demonstrated through the examples of “This ‘thin’ argumentation on the other side gave

me a ‘now more than ever’ attitude” and “I felt that none of my colleagues supported my ideas”.

- Finally, when implementing changes, it is essential to have an adequate plan in place, as alluded to in the statement “I was just following advice and opinions from my research”. If no plan is followed, it can lead to a situation of trial and error, as seen in the example of “No, I didn’t follow a systematic plan. I was just following advice and opinions from my research”. If a plan was followed, it may still not be enough, as highlighted in the statement of “Overall, too little systematic planning on my part. This is where I see my shortcoming. Very operationally driven”.

## 5.2. Research Question 2: Which Success and Failure Factors Can Be Identified That Influence Leaders’ Behavior When Managing Organizational Change in a Multi-Crisis Context?

The research question “Which success and failure factors can be identified that influence leaders’ behavior when managing organizational change in a multi-crisis context?” has been processed by comparing the experience statements from the leaders explored in Research Question 1 according to the success and failure factors derived from existing literature. Here, the goal has been to identify which success and failure factors can be supported by the statements of the leaders. The leader’s positive experiences have been compared with success factors and the leader’s negative experiences with the failure factors. The results are classified according to the levels: personal, situational, decisional, and transitional. In the final step the identified relations between leader’s experience and success and failure factors has been analyzed and inductive coded with the aim to summarize them under more compact and concise factors.

Various examples show the classified data, the entire data table couldn’t be presented in the study in case of length. Firstly, examples of positive experiences and related success factors are expressed. Personal level: The text and the success category (**good management and leadership**) both emphasize the importance of effective communication (Example: “The challenges that came with the change included finding new ways to communicate effectively with team members.”) and effective leadership (Example: “As a manager, I have always tried to let employees see the advantages of the change.”). Situational level: “We had to make sure that we involved everyone in the company to ensure the implementation of the change” (**need for effective communication**). Decisional level: “I consulted intensively with the people involved to take into account different perspectives and expertise” (**active participation**). Transitional level: Proactivity and inclusion (**active participation**), as another participant noted through their actions of “[involving] employees in decision-making” and “[developing] a shared sense of purpose and commitment to the organization’s mission and goals” (**value system**) can be especially beneficial.

Secondly, negative experiences and related failure factors has been identified. Personal level: **(resistance to change)** is mentioned in both as a negative experience motivating factor, with the text providing an example of how it could lead to the need to motivate and engage employees to successfully implement the change “There was also resistance to the change and the need to motivate and engage employees in order to successfully implement the change”. Situational level: The text and failure both mention **(bad management and poor leadership)** as my boss refusing to work from home “I wanted to work from home like all my colleagues. A But the boss wouldn’t allow me to do that”. Furthermore, the text and failure both mention **(disregarded human integration)**, such as standing up for others and getting criticized (“When I relied on others for my purposes, I experienced a combined reaction from them. Some of them criticized me for my laziness and I was hurt by the negative criticism.”). Decisional level: This can lead to resignation and frustration, such as “I thought about quitting my job” (resignation) and “I often had to give up the thought related to the diss” **(cynicism)**. Motivation and volition during times of change often involve being unmotivated (lack of knowledge about the future state) as can be seen through the example of “I felt demotivated and wondered if the change was really worth the effort” **(dysfunctional organizational culture)** and “I started to feel a little helpless, thinking that they were unfairly targeted this week due to the company’s bad trading” **(bad management and poor leadership)**. Transitional level: The sense of security during the change process was often challenged by feelings of insecurity **(lack of knowledge about the future state)**, fear **(fear of the unknown)**, and stress **(cynicism, resistance)**. As one individual reflected, “In the face of the change, I did not feel safe as there was a lot of ambiguity”, and another noted, “In terms of safety, I felt insecure or anxious about my physical safety if I had to work in an office during a pandemic”. Additionally, change can hit people physically and emotionally **(dysfunctional organizational culture)**, which can manifest itself as “anxiety, insecurity, and stress”. The sense of community during change was often hindered by a lack of belonging and inclusion **(disregarded human integration)**, as one person noted, “in terms of belonging and inclusion, I felt disconnected from my team members and colleagues during the transition to remote work”, and a general lack of solidarity, as another reflected, “No changes, only higher employee satisfaction solidarity from the big management was hardly given”.

As a summarization, **Table 9** shows the identified success and failure factors that influenced leaders’ behavior when managing organizational change in a multi-crisis context.

After the presentation of leader’s negative experience and failure factors and the leader’s positive experiences and success factors, the next final step has been the analysis and inductive coding of the results presented in **Table 9** with the aim to summarize them under the main aspects of the relationship between the leader’s experience and the success and failure factors.

**Table 9.** Identified success and failure factors categorized by change levels.

Change levels	Positive experiences and success factors	Negative experience and failure factors
<b>Personal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good management and leadership.</li> <li>• Active participation.</li> <li>• Systematic change process.</li> <li>• Functional organizational culture.</li> <li>• Value system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resistance to change.</li> <li>• Fear of loss.</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge about the future state.</li> </ul>
<b>Situational</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">Good management and leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce sustainable results.</li> <li>• Need resources, stick to a systematic approach/model.</li> <li>• Conviviality in the new workplace.</li> <li>• Adapt quickly to change.</li> <li>• Finding new ways to keep team members productive and engaged.</li> <li>• Need for effective communication.</li> <li>• Need to involve employees and managers.</li> <li>• Importance of team work.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Active participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early adequate, active participation of all individuals/groups affected.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Value system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting a new set of values.</li> <li>• Using the concept of “purpose” to control and influence organizational change.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Systematic change process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building a powerful support base.</li> <li>• Anchoring changes firmly in the corporate success and corporate culture Aligning structures, systems, structures and policies.</li> <li>• Creating short-term wins.</li> <li>• Creating a sense of urgency.</li> <li>• Communicating the vision.</li> <li>• Remove obstacles.</li> <li>• Developing a clear vision.</li> <li>• Create a vision/change message and communicate it throughout the organization.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Functional organizational culture (2):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a culture of continuous learning.</li> <li>• Importance of culture (2).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bad management and poor leadership.</li> <li>• Dysfunctional organizational culture.</li> <li>• Disregarded human integration.</li> <li>• Resistance.</li> <li>• Cynicism.</li> </ul>
<b>Decisional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good management and leadership.</li> <li>• Active participation.</li> <li>• Systematic change process.</li> <li>• Value system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dysfunctional organizational culture.</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge about the future.</li> <li>• Cynicism.</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge about the future.</li> <li>• Dysfunctional organizational culture.</li> <li>• Bad management and poor leadership.</li> <li>• Disregarded human.</li> <li>• Value systems.</li> </ul>

## Continued

<b>Transitional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good management and leadership (3).</li> <li>• Functional organizational culture (3).</li> <li>• Active participation (8).</li> <li>• Value system (4).</li> <li>• Communication and collaboration based on shared values.</li> <li>• Systematic change process (4).</li> <li>• Creating a sense of urgency.</li> <li>• Creating short-term wins.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resignation.</li> <li>• Value systems.</li> <li>• Bad management and poor leadership.</li> <li>• Disregarded human integration.</li> <li>• Bad management and poor.</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge about the future state.</li> <li>• Fear of the unknown.</li> <li>• Cynicism, resistance.</li> <li>• Dysfunctional organizational culture.</li> <li>• Lack of commitment from the management board.</li> </ul>
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### 5.2.1. Leader's Negative Experience and Failure Factors

The failure factors were divided into those that occur most often according to the studies and those that occur less frequently. Various examples show the classified data, the entire data tables couldn't be presented in the study in case of length.

Studies have identified "resistance to organizational change" as the most cited failure factor, as well as other failure factors such as lack of knowledge about the future state, dysfunctional organizational culture, bad management, and poor leadership, disregarded human integration, and value systems as less frequently but still relevant occurring factors. **Table 10** shows the results of the analysis for the failure factor "resistance to organizational change". The table is structured by the change levels: personal, situational, decisional, and transitional, and the categories: the failure factors, examples, and the synthesized main aspects.

The other failure factors (see **Table 10**) excluded "resistance to organizational change" has been analyzed regarding its main aspects. **Table 11** shows examples of failure factors and its expression in statements of the leaders and the result of the analysis to find the main aspects.

After the analysis of the failure factors and its main aspects in the following section the exploration has the purpose to identify the main aspects of the success factors.

### 5.2.2. Leader's Positive Experiences and Success Factors

In **Table 12**, leader's positive experiences and related success factors were divided into the change levels: personal, situational, decisional, and transitional, and the categories: the success factors, examples of statements and the synthesized main aspects. **Table 12** shows examples of the results of the analysis for the success factors.

### 5.2.3. Summary of the Main Aspects of Success and Failure Factors

**Table 13** provides a summarized overview of the main aspects of success and failure factors, broken down into personal, situational, decisional, and transitional levels.

**Table 10.** Results of the analysis for the failure factor “resistance to organizational change”.

Change levels	Failure factors	Example	Main aspect
<b>Personal</b>	Resistance to change. Fear of loss (feelings of helplessness).	“There was also resistance to the change and the need to motivate and engage employees in order to successfully implement the change.” “And then you see a lot of things you’ve worked hard for, a little bit perishing.”	Fear of loss.
<b>Situational</b>	Resistance. Open criticism. Cynicism (such as unsuccessful attempts of change decreasing trust in agents of change). Lack of hope.	“In general, when there is a big change, it affects many people, such as our company. That change was COVID.” “We were struggling to complete the project with my team, there wasn’t much time to implement it. The main problems were that we had to organize more expertise for a particular project.”	Worrying.
<b>Decisional</b>	Resignation. Cynicism.	“I thought about quitting my job.” “I often had to give up the thought related to the diss”.	Risk of loss of control.
<b>Transitional</b>	Resistance. Cynicism. Resignation.	“In the face of the change, I did not feel safe as there was a lot of ambiguity,” “In terms of safety, I felt insecure or anxious about my physical safety if I had to work in an office during a pandemic.” “I feel left out and have lost motivation.” “There have been many minor reasons, but that has now been the rest.” “It takes a lot of strength to win everyone over.”	Adjustment anxiety, also known as social anxiety.

**Table 11.** Examples of the results of the analysis for the other relevant failure factors.

Change levels	Aspect	Example	Main aspect
<b>Personal</b>	Lack of knowledge about the future state.	“Is the lack of knowledge about the future state, as change is a journey into the unknown?” “Which caused me a lot of stress myself, because I knew exactly that she wouldn’t change anything for the management positions, but then our smallest worker with a lower income would have to suffer anyway.”	Fear of the unknown or hope. Social responsibility.

Continued

<b>Situational</b>	Disregarded human integration. Dysfunctional organizational culture. Bad management and poor leadership.	“When I relied on others for my purposes, I experienced a combined reaction from them. Some of them criticized me for my laziness and I was hurt by the negative criticism.” “I had to justify very quickly everything that had been built and why.”	Disappointment. Justification. Time pressure. Pressure uncertainty. Coordination. Fairness.
<b>Decisional</b>	Dysfunctional organizational culture. Lack of knowledge about the future state. Disregarded human integration. Value system.	“I started to feel a little helpless, thinking that they were unfairly targeted this week due to the company’s bad trading.” “I felt demotivated and wondered if the change was really worth the effort.”	Helplessness. Motivation. Time pressure. Reorientation. Being externally determined.
<b>Transitional</b>	Bad management and poor leadership. Value systems. Disregarded human integration. Dysfunctional organizational culture. Lack of commitment from the management board.	“I feel left out and have lost motivation.” “There have been many minor reasons, but that has now been the rest.” “It takes a lot of strength to win everyone over.” “In terms of belonging and inclusion, I felt disconnected from my team members and colleagues during the transition to remote work.” “Anxiety, insecurity, and stress.” No rituals, not at all.	Feeling excluded outgroup. Give up. Struggle. Change. Belonging and inclusion. Solidarity. Anxiety. Communitas.

Table 12. Examples of the results of the analysis for the success factors.

Change level	Success factors	Examples	Main aspect
<b>Personal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good management and leadership.</li> <li>• Active participation.</li> <li>• Systematic change process.</li> <li>• Functional organizational culture.</li> <li>• Value system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The challenges that came with the change included finding new ways to communicate effectively with team members.”</li> <li>• “Change is part of life.”</li> </ul>	Communication. Optimism.
<b>Situational</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good management and leadership.</li> <li>• Active participation.</li> <li>• Systematic change process.</li> <li>• Functional organizational culture (2).</li> <li>• Importance of culture (2).</li> </ul>	<p>Good management and leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “We had to make sure that we involved everyone in the company to ensure the implementation of the change.”</li> </ul> <p>Active participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I consulted intensively with the people involved to take into account different perspectives and expertise.”</li> </ul> <p>Value system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Normal. There is nothing to complain about, you have to work to constantly raise the standard of living.”</li> </ul>	Team involvement. Business processes. Mindset.



Continued

<b>Decisional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good management and leadership.</li> <li>• Active participation.</li> <li>• Systematic change process.</li> <li>• Value system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The goal was to create a more agile and flexible organization in order to better meet the challenges of the future.”</li> <li>• “Change has two sides, which are positive and negative.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adaptation.</li> <li>Optimism.</li> <li>Knowledge sharing.</li> </ul>
<b>Transitional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good management and leadership (3).</li> <li>• Functional organizational culture (3).</li> <li>• Active participation (8).</li> <li>• Value system (4).</li> <li>• Systematic change process (4).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A feeling of being “in good hands”.</li> <li>• “My biggest support was my family.”</li> <li>• “I felt very connected to my team, their problems were my problems.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Motivation.</li> <li>Trust.</li> <li>Team work.</li> </ul>

**Table 13.** Summary of the main aspects of success and failure factors.

Change levels	Main aspects of success-factors and positive experience	Main aspects of failure-factors and negative experience
<b>Personal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication.</li> <li>• Optimism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of the unknown or hope.</li> <li>• Social responsibility.</li> <li>• Fear of loss.</li> </ul>
<b>Situational</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team involvement.</li> <li>• Business processes.</li> <li>• Mindset.</li> <li>• Social responsibility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disappointment.</li> <li>• Justification.</li> <li>• Time pressure.</li> <li>• Pressure uncertainty.</li> <li>• Coordination.</li> <li>• Fairness.</li> <li>• Worrying.</li> </ul>
<b>Decisional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adaptation.</li> <li>• Optimism.</li> <li>• Knowledge sharing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helplessness.</li> <li>• (De)-motivation.</li> <li>• Time pressure.</li> <li>• Reorientation.</li> <li>• Being externally determined.</li> <li>• Risk of loss of control.</li> </ul>
<b>transitional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivation.</li> <li>• Trust.</li> <li>• Team involvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling excluded outgroup.</li> <li>• Give up.</li> <li>• Struggle.</li> <li>• Change.</li> <li>• belonging and inclusion.</li> <li>• Solidarity.</li> <li>• Anxiety.</li> <li>• Communitas.</li> <li>• Adjustment anxiety/social anxiety.</li> </ul>

The main aspects of success and failure factors at the different levels (personal, situational, decisional and transitional) can be summarized into two perspectives, one the managerial perspective with factors such as communication, team involvement, business processes, time pressure, coordination, change, and adaptation, and the psychological perspective with mechanisms such as motivation, trust, feeling excluded outgroup, belonging and inclusion, anxiety, helplessness, (de)-motivation, fear of the unknown or hope, social responsibility, fear of loss, fairness, and worrying. According to the study results, different forms of fear (anxiety, adjustment anxiety/social anxiety, fear of the unknown, fear of loss) and worry (worrying, risk of loss of control), as well as ethical aspects (social responsibility, fairness) and social aspects (feeling excluded outgroup, belonging and inclusion) have played an important role in the leader's experience of organizational change in multi-crisis context.

The last part of finding section is answering the third research question. "What are the basic psychological needs of leaders within organizational change in a multi-crisis context?"

### **5.3. Research Question 3: What Are the Basic Psychological Needs of Leaders within Organizational Change in a Multi-Crisis Context?**

The basic psychological needs theory (BPNT) (Fotiadis, Abdulrahman, & Spyridou, 2019; Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2022; Vans-teenkiste, Ryan, & Soenens, 2020) considers the satisfaction and frustration of three basic psychological needs as essential for human flourishing and well-being: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. According to the theoretical underpinning of the basic psychological need concept the three basic psychological needs can be characterized by its description, impact, and development (see **Table 12**).

The results of this investigation suggest that the main aspects of success and failure factors can be categorized applying the basic psychological needs. **Table 14** outlines this, with the structure of listing the basic psychological needs with their attributes of satisfaction or frustration, and the categorized underlying mechanisms of the positive and negative experiences.

For instance, main aspect such as optimism and motivation can contribute to a sense of autonomy and volition, while external determinism and fear of the unknown may lead to a feeling of pressure and less autonomy. Similarly, active work on team involvement and knowledge sharing foster competence satisfaction, while a feeling of loss and helplessness can result in competence frustration. Additionally, trust and a sense of social responsibility promote relatedness satisfaction, whereas worrying, feeling excluded and missing solidarity led to relatedness frustration.

## **6. Discussion**

This research purpose was to examine the experiences of leader's satisfaction or frustration of their basic psychological needs expressed by success and failure factors of organizational change in a multi-crisis context. The research aim was

**Table 14.** Categorization of main aspects regarding basic psychological needs.

Basic psychological needs	Satisfaction/frustration state	Main aspects of positive experience	Main aspects of negative experience
<b>Autonomy</b>	Satisfaction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of volition and willingness.</li> <li>• Sense of integrity.</li> <li>• Feelings are self-endorsed and authentic.</li> </ul> Frustration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sense of pressure.</li> <li>• Feeling pushed in an unwanted direction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimism.</li> <li>• Mindset.</li> <li>• Adaptation.</li> <li>• Motivation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of the unknown or hope.</li> <li>• Justification.</li> <li>• Pressure uncertainty.</li> <li>• (De)-motivation.</li> <li>• Reorientation.</li> <li>• Being externally determined.</li> <li>• Risk of loss of control.</li> <li>• Struggle.</li> <li>• Change.</li> <li>• Anxiety.</li> </ul>
<b>Competence</b>	Satisfaction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of effectiveness and mastery.</li> <li>• Engages in activities.</li> <li>• Using and extending skills and expertise.</li> </ul> Frustration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sense of ineffectiveness.</li> <li>• Even failure and helplessness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team involvement.</li> <li>• Business processes.</li> <li>• Knowledge sharing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of loss.</li> <li>• Time pressure.</li> <li>• Coordination.</li> <li>• Helplessness.</li> <li>• Give up.</li> </ul>
<b>Relatedness</b>	Satisfaction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of warmth, bonding, and care, and is satisfied by.</li> <li>• Connecting to and feeling significant to others.</li> </ul> Frustration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sense of social alienation, exclusion, and loneliness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication.</li> <li>• Social responsibility.</li> <li>• Trust.</li> <li>• Team involvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social responsibility.</li> <li>• Disappointment.</li> <li>• Lack of fairness.</li> <li>• Worrying.</li> <li>• Feeling excluded outgroup.</li> <li>• Lack of belonging and inclusion.</li> <li>• Lack of solidarity.</li> <li>• Lack of communitas.</li> <li>• Adjustment anxiety/social anxiety.</li> </ul>

to uncover success, failure factors, and the underpinning basic psychological needs of leaders and answering the final question how a need-supported change design should look like. To this end, three research questions focus on leader's positive and negative change experiences (need-based experiences), uncovering success and failure factors, and identifying the underpinning basic psychological needs of leaders. Based on the findings of the first three research questions the final question can be answered: How a need-supported change design should look like to improve the chances of leaders to successfully deal with organizational change in a multi-crisis context?

This study attempts to provide organizations and leaders with valuable insights to help them improve their success rates in organizational changes during times of multi-crisis context by an appropriate need-based supported change design. The interview data provides a comprehensive analysis of leadership positive

and negative experiences concerning the effects of organizational change during and after the pandemic years. At different stages of change development (before, during, after), leaders convey both positive and negative experiences of undergoing change in a multi-crisis context. Post-pandemic perspectives are also considered within this comprehensive qualitative data set.

The discussion of the results follows the logic of research questions (see **Figure 2**). The answers to the research questions are interdependent, as the results of the first question provide the basis for analyzing the second question, and the results of the second are used to address the third. All together build the basis for answering the final research question.

- 1) What are the positive and negative experiences of leaders of organizational change in a multi-crisis context?
- 2) Which success and failure factors influence leaders' behavior when managing organizational change in a multi-crisis context?
- 3) What are the basic psychological needs of leaders within organizational change in a multi-crisis context?

### **6.1. Research Question 1: What Are the Positive and Negative Experiences of Leaders of Organizational Change in a Multi-Crisis Context?**

The experience of change is made up of sensation, perception, meaning-making, form and process. Past experiences can lead to both increased fatigue and cynicism towards future initiatives, while also granting the opportunity to develop more constructive change capabilities. Research shows that positive prior change experiences are linked to a higher capacity for change in organizations (Elkjaer, 2009; Heckmann, Steger, & Dowling, 2016; Jarvis, 2006; Paulsen, 2020; Stensaker & Meyer, 2012).

The study investigated the personal, situational, decisional, and transitional levels of organizational change based on Lewin's and Van Gennep's change models. On the personal level, the factors investigated included motivation level: degree of motivation, personal values, and expectations, as well as inclusive social status. On the situational level, the factors analyzed were influence by general atmosphere, influence of other people, and influence of adapted and new structures, processes, and rules (and social norms derived from them). On the decisional level, the factors investigated were balancing opportunities and risks, evaluation of results in relation to reference points, willingness to act with a high level of motivation, comparison of alternatives based on losses/gains, balancing and reflection, motivation and volition, and implementation (interest in planning). On the transitional level, the study researched the factors of accompaniment, community, sense of security, and rituals. The following are examples of the identified aspects that reflect the positive and negative experiences of leaders, presented in **Tables 15-18**. Afterwards, the results have been interpreted regarding the final research question to find out, how to build a need-based supported change design for organizational change in a multi-crisis context.

**Table 15.** Examples of leader's positive and negative experiences on the personal level.

Category	Description	Positive experience	Negative experience
<b>Motivation level</b>	Degree of motivation as the sum of all conscious and unconscious motives (driving forces) for everything a leader strives for.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrating the benefits of change.</li> <li>• Shaping change in a positive way.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflicts, resistance and declining employee motivation.</li> <li>• Everyone fights for himself.</li> <li>• Skepticism.</li> </ul>
<b>Personal values and expectations</b>	Values are general objectives. Expectations are ideas, assumptions or desires of how something or someone should be in the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel comfortable and be able to integrate.</li> <li>• Change is part of life.</li> <li>• Looking for challenges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disappointment: "don't rely on others".</li> <li>• Moral dilemma leads to stress.</li> <li>• Being externally determined.</li> </ul>
<b>Include social status</b>	Social status describes the effective assignment of a social position in a system of social, i.e. socially inscribed and historically grown hierarchies and hierarchies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility expanded.</li> <li>• Receive respect.</li> <li>• Promises made.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reorganization leads to team downsizing.</li> <li>• Difficult relationships with colleagues.</li> <li>• High expectation pressure.</li> </ul>

**Table 16.** Examples of leader's positive and negative experiences on the situational level.

Category	Description	Positive experience	Negative experience
<b>Influence by general atmosphere</b>	Atmosphere is called mood or aura in phenomenology. It is a subjective mood that is conveyed socially and by the external environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid adaptation to change.</li> <li>• Finding new ways to keep team members productive and engaged.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in the workflow (overtime, time pressure).</li> <li>• Loss of friendly relations.</li> <li>• Deterioration of the working atmosphere.</li> </ul>
<b>Influence of other people</b>	Social influence is the change of opinions, attitudes and behavior through the influence of other people or groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve and involve all stakeholders.</li> <li>• Takeover of the company by others.</li> <li>• Training for career path.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial difficulties for long-standing cooperation partners.</li> <li>• Poor relationships with the team.</li> <li>• Boss refuses to work from home.</li> </ul>
<b>Influence of adapted and new structures, processes and rules (and social norms derived from them)</b>	Social norms are concrete instructions for action that affect social behavior. They define responsible social action in situations of everyday life and work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapting team culture to new rules.</li> <li>• Face-to-face meetings introduced in the office.</li> <li>• COVID forces social distancing to contain the virus.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand up for others and get criticized, hurt me.</li> <li>• Have to adopt an attitude of justification.</li> <li>• Bottleneck time leads to accusation of "no time for us".</li> </ul>
<b>Support from others</b>	Social support, as a sub-area of social networks, can have a direct effect on psychological well-being, alleviate stress, but also mitigate the effects of unfavorable living conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding and support from stakeholders.</li> <li>• Employee participation.</li> <li>• Receive external support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The biggest challenge: Familiarizing everyone involved with the new processes and responsibilities during ongoing operations.</li> </ul>

**Table 17.** Examples of leader’s positive and negative experiences on the decisional level.

Category	Description	Positive experience	Negative experience
<b>Balancing opportunities and risks</b>	The analysis of opportunities and threats (risks) is a task in the preparation of business decisions and is necessary in order to be able to weigh up the expected returns from them against the risks (risk-appropriate evaluation of options for action, such as investments).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don’t make a problematic decision.</li> <li>• Weighing the pros and cons of solutions.</li> <li>• Consciously taking a calculated risk.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No room for maneuvers, just the question of who it affects and when.</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation of results in relation to reference points</b>	The benefit to the decision-maker is not measured by the absolute benefit. It refers to a reference point and the change to that reference point. Losses are weighted more heavily than profits due to the emotions that arise compared to profits. In the loss area, the behavior of individuals is also much more willing to take risks than in the profit area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Securing the future through agile organization.</li> <li>• Adhere to the time frame and do not interfere with ongoing operations.</li> <li>• New frameworks (infrastructure, technology, remote work, leadership).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing offices leads to deterioration.</li> <li>• Fears of not understanding the new system.</li> <li>• Employee resignation creates moral dilemma.</li> </ul>
<b>Willingness to act with a high level of motivation</b>	The willingness to act describes the motivation to perform a certain action. It is influenced by internal and external factors and is therefore a control regulator for the execution of actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spontaneous problem solving.</li> <li>• Learning from change.</li> <li>• Coping with the team’s tendency to retreat.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges for managers and employees in adapting to new technologies and ways of working.</li> <li>• Not being able to change anything about a situation itself.</li> </ul>
<b>Comparison of alternatives based on losses/gains.</b>	Losses are weighted more heavily than profits due to the emotions that arise compared to profits. In the loss area, the behavior of individuals is also much more willing to take risks than in the profit area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeing the challenges of transitioning to remote work as an opportunity.</li> <li>• There are two sides to change.</li> <li>• Dissatisfaction alternatives to the current employer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambiguities in the organization of work (agile/classic) create coordination problems.</li> <li>• Heteronomy.</li> <li>• Have to implement the decisions of others.</li> </ul>

## Continued

<b>Balancing and reflection</b>	Reflection also describes the ability to perceive one's own behavior, mental concepts, feelings and attitudes and to critically question them in relation to the environment, and is therefore a necessary prerequisite for learning from experiences, before, during or especially after an event.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of solutions</li> <li>• Be flexible and adaptable</li> <li>• Consciously managing risks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The customer makes the decision.</li> <li>• Learning curve focus on the essentials.</li> <li>• Coercion through assumption of responsibility.</li> </ul>
<b>Motivation and volition</b>	Motivation is the desire to do something; volition is the absolute commitment to achieving something.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't want to give up.</li> <li>• Adapt.</li> <li>• Joint decision with team, being able to rely on each other.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being unmotivated.</li> <li>• Resignation.</li> <li>• Frustration.</li> <li>• "Now more than ever" attitude.</li> <li>• Lack of recognition.</li> </ul>
<b>Implementation (interest in planning)</b>	Systematically planning the change process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systematic approach.</li> <li>• Close coordination with stakeholders.</li> <li>• Feedback sought.</li> <li>• Alignment with what is possible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No, no plan followed.</li> <li>• Planning was not sufficient.</li> </ul>

Table 18. Examples of leader's positive and negative experiences on the transitional level.

Category	Description	Positive experience	Negative experience
<b>Accompaniment</b>	Experiencing support during the change process and feeling to be "in good hands".	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting top management.</li> <li>• Support of employees by managers.</li> <li>• Fostering new skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling ignored.</li> <li>• Resignation.</li> <li>• Lack of team motivation.</li> <li>• Effort to motivate others.</li> </ul>
<b>Communitas</b>	Communitas has been a concept that implies a sense of equality, mutual respect, and shared humanity among all people regardless of their social status or power.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believe in the team.</li> <li>• Trust and support.</li> <li>• Belonging/Solidarity.</li> <li>• Proactivity.</li> <li>• Feeling of connectedness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of belonging and inclusion.</li> <li>• Lack of solidarity.</li> </ul>
<b>Sense of security</b>	The environment in which the Change took place was safe and pleasant for me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger sense of security/well-being.</li> <li>• Communication and collaboration based on shared values.</li> <li>• Support from family.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling insecure.</li> <li>• Fear.</li> <li>• Stress.</li> <li>• Loneliness and optimism.</li> <li>• Self-discipline (putting one's own needs "on the back burner").</li> </ul>
<b>Rituals and ritualizations</b>	Rituals and ritualizations generate meaning and significance, because they are a practical interpretation of the social in performances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group activities.</li> <li>• Individual activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "No, it was simply decided without us".</li> <li>• Not at all (17 mentions).</li> </ul>

#### Personal level

Leaders experience a variety of positive and negative experience when dealing with organizational change. The degree of motivation will ultimately determine how successful they are in making changes and shaping the future of their organization. They must also strive for balance between their values and expectations while adhering to social status. Leaders must be prepared to face resistance and declining employee motivation, skepticism, and conflict as well as the disappointment that comes with relying on others. Additionally, moral dilemmas or external determinations can lead to stress. If they are to succeed, they must demonstrate the benefits of change and be able to expand their responsibilities to receive respect. They must also be able to look for and take on new challenges while facing the potential of reorganizations that lead to team downsizing and difficult relationships with colleagues. Ultimately, it is a combination of these positive and negative experiences that will shape and impact a leader's success.

#### Situational level

Leaders experience both positive and negative experiences at the situational level which have an impact on their and other roles expectation within organizational change. This involves the ability to rapidly adapt to changes, finding new ways to keep team members productive and engaged, and changes in the workflow. Positive experiences include involving and involving all stakeholders, training for career paths, and receiving external support. On the other hand, leaders may experience negative influences such as deterioration of the working atmosphere, poor relationships with the team, and financial difficulties for long-standing cooperation partners. Moreover, they must face challenges in adopting an attitude of justification, dealing with bottleneck times, and familiarizing everyone involved with the new processes and responsibilities during ongoing operations. To be successful, leaders need to rely on social influence, social norms, and social support from their team members.

#### Decisional level

Leaders experience both positive and negative aspects at the decisional level. Balancing opportunities and risks are important to weigh up the expected returns from them against the risks. This requires conscious risk-taking and weighing the pros and cons of solutions. It is also essential to evaluate the results in relation to reference points and be willing to act with a high level of motivation. Leaders need to be able to compare alternatives based on gains and losses and must be able to balance and reflect what is occurring. Further, it is vital to have a systematic approach to planning for the implementation of the decision. To be successful, leaders must be very conscious of the potential risks involved and create plans that will minimize them. It is also important to stay motivated, open to new opportunities, and have the courage to take calculated risks. Having a supportive team and the right tools in place can help to manage the negative aspects of decision making. Because it is important to note that decision making can also be difficult and challenging, presenting negative emotions such as fear



of the unknown, frustration, lack of recognition, resignation, and lack of motivation. Poor planning can also lead to a lack of progress, so it is important to systematically plan the change process and closely coordinate with stakeholders. Overall, decision making involves an assessment of opportunities and risks, where leaders must be able to leverage the motivations and volition of their teams and make the best possible decisions to achieve success.

#### Transitional level

The transitional level of change process is focused on what leader's experience (positively and negatively) during the change process, how this affects the process, and what leaders can do to ensure a successful transition. For the change to be effective and successful, there need to be accompaniment by the organization, integrated *communitas* approach, a sense of security and the application of rituals. Accompaniment refers to leaders feeling supported during the change process and feeling as though they are in "good hands". To ensure this, organizations must provide support for all leaders involved in the process, while leaders must provide additional support to all employees. If leaders fail to help or do not provide enough support, this can lead to feeling ignored or resignation. Consequently, the change process may not be successful in motivating the team, and efforts to motivate may fail. *Communitas* is a concept that implies a sense of equality, mutual respect, and shared humanity among all involved. All other elements of the transition process rely on *communitas* in some way, as it is important for the team to believe in each other, trust and support each other, and gain a sense of belonging. Without it, feelings of lack of belonging and lack of solidarity are likely to surface. Providing a sense of security is also important during the transition process. The environment should be safe and pleasant, with communication based on shared values and support from family. If any element of security is missing, fear and stress can arise and lead to feelings of insecurity, loneliness, and pessimism. And finally, rituals are important in generating meaning and significance. They also help to interpret the social aspects of change. Team and individual activities are important so that all leaders involved in the process can be part of the decision-making process. If all leaders are not actively included in the decision-making process, then they may feel as though the decisions are made without their input.

#### Explored requirements for need-based supported change design

Four levels of change are assessed based on the underlying theories on change. Lewin's Field Theory forms the personal, the situational level, and the decisional level and van Gennep's Rite of Passage Model, the transitional level. Findings show that the chosen categories for coding are well aligned with the experience data of leaders for the first three levels. Each category from the individual levels can be backed by statements/examples of positive and negative experiences of leaders, indicating that leaders make experiences of these aspects, can remember them during the survey, and thus demonstrate their significance and relevance. The core concept of the Field Theory maps well with the qualitative data. The

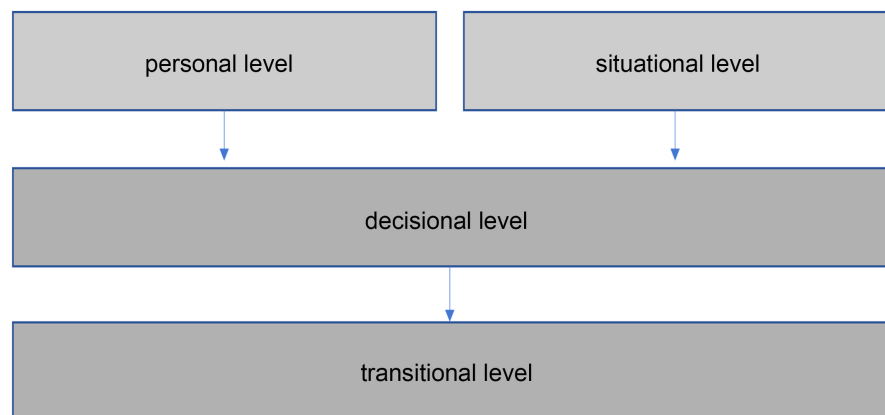
Field Theory is based on the idea that the leader's behavior is a function of the interaction between the person and their environment and is determined by psychological forces that can either motivate a leader to be willing to change or be demotivated and resistant. The core concept of the Rite of Passage Model is only partly supported by the experience data of the leaders. In addition to the model's expectation that leaders express a need for community and involvement, which they do, most of the leader's state that they do not practice any common rituals during the change period. The concept of *communitas* (a sense of equality, mutual respect, and shared humanity among all people regardless of their social status or power) does not appear as an experience of the leaders. Here, a gap seems to exist in the current need-supported design of change processes. In summary, it can be concluded that in need-supported design of change processes, the levels of the person, the situation, and the decision have been considered so far, but not enough attention has been paid to the necessity to include the perspective of transition level of change more strongly. **Figure 3** outlines the four level of influencing factors.

Data confirms that leaders express a strong need for community and involvement, but it does not seem to be adequately and explicitly satisfied by rituals and *communitas*. This may be contributing to a reduction of positive experiences and an increase of negative experiences during change processes.

It can be concluded that in a need-based supported change design of change processes all four levels of change: the personal, the situational, the decisional and the transitional level must be considered order to improve the chances of leaders to successfully deal with organizational change in a multi-crisis context.

## 6.2. Research Question 2: Which Success and Failure Factors Influence Leaders' Behavior When Managing Organizational Change in a Multi-Crisis Context?

The collected positive and negative experiences of leaders have been categorized according to the success and failure factors identified through existing studies. The result has been that all success and failure factors have corresponded to



**Figure 3.** Outlines the four level of change.

categories with experiences of leaders in multi-crisis situations. For all four levels (personal, situational, decisional, and transitional) both the positive and the negative experiences have been able to be attributed to the success and failure factors. This has meant that the occurrence and effectiveness of the success and failure factors have been possible in all levels, thus granting relevance to the overall system of the levels of organizational change. It has also shown that an isolated and overly one-sided consideration of success and failure factors in the planning and design of change measures is not worthwhile. Both success factors and failure factors need to be always considered at all levels and in the change process to increase positive experiences and reduce negative experiences. For example, Kotter's 8 Step Change Model does not explicitly consider personal factors (motivation level, personal values and expectations, social status), transitional factors (accompaniment, *communitas*, sense of security, rituals) and some of the decisional factors (balancing opportunities and risks, evaluation of results in relation to reference points, comparison of alternatives based on losses/gains, balancing and reflection, motivation, and volition).

### **Main Aspects of Success and Failure Factors**

The assumption of the analysis has focused on the main aspects underlying the occurrence and efficacy of success and failure factors. For the most common failure factor, resistance, cynicism, and resignation, the main aspects identified have been fear of loss, worrying, risk of loss of control, and adjustment anxiety/social anxiety. For the other failure factors, further main aspects have been explored, such as lack of knowledge about the future state (fear of the unknown or hope, social responsibility), for disregarded human integration, dysfunctional organizational culture, bad management, and poor leadership (disappointment, justification, time pressure, pressure uncertainty, coordination, fairness) on the situational level and for dysfunctional organizational culture, lack of knowledge about the future state, disregarded human integration, value system (helplessness, motivation, time pressure, reorientation, being externally determined) on the transition level. Finally, for bad management and poor leadership, value systems, disregarded human integration, dysfunctional organizational culture, and lack of commitment from the management board, the following mechanisms have been identified: feeling excluded outgroup, giving up, struggling, changing, belonging and inclusion, solidarity, anxiety, and *communitas*. This demonstrates that although the same failure factors may be manifested on different levels, the underlying main aspects may differ.

It can be argued that like the statement from Research Question 2, that both success factors and failure factors need to be taken into consideration at any point and any level of the change process is evident to increase positive experiences and reduce negative ones. Therefore, it is not enough to simply foster or pay attention to success factors at any level, but failure factors must also be actively addressed. The absence of failure factors does not necessarily lead to a positive experience if the success factors are expressed lowly, and vice versa.

### 6.3. Research Question 3: What Are the Basic Psychological Needs of Leaders within Organizational Change in a Multi-Crisis Context?

Grounded on the theoretical assumptions of the impact of basic psychological needs on organizational change outcomes (Deci, Olafsen, & Ryan, 2017; Gagne, Koestner, & Zuckerman, 2000; Huang, 2022; Rahi & Ahmad, 2020) and based on the findings of Research Questions 2 and 3, it can be argued that the main aspects of success and failure factors could be meaningfully assigned to the three basic psychological needs of leaders. Table 19 shows the proposed relation between the three psychological needs and the main aspects of the success and failure factors divided in satisfaction state corresponding to main aspects of success factors and frustration state containing the main aspects of the failure factors.

The argumentation has been grounded on the basic psychological needs theory which proposed that leaders have been equipped with significant basic psychological need that depend on the specific social contexts of organizational change underlying their natural inclination towards increasing self-organization, adaptation, flourishing, action, and growth-oriented behavior (Ryan, Deci, & Grolnick, 1995). More in depth earlier studies have demonstrated that higher levels of SDT components such as competence, autonomy, relatedness can lead to increased

**Table 19.** Basic psychological needs and its expression by the main aspects of the success and failure factors.

Basic psychological needs	Satisfaction	Frustration
<b>Autonomy</b>	Feeling of a sense of integrity (self-endorsed and authentic feelings, thoughts and actions) due to the occurrence of feelings of optimism, growth mindset, activated motivation and the ability of adaptation.	Feeling of being pushed into an unwanted direction and experiencing a sense of pressure due to fear of the unknown or due to feeling of hope, justification, pressure of uncertainty, demotivation, reorientation, feeling externally determined, risk of losing control, struggle with change, and anxiety.
<b>Competence</b>	Experience of effectiveness and mastery (extending their skills and expertise) has led to the development of team involvement, the optimization of business processes, and the sharing of knowledge within the team when it has been satisfied.	A sense of ineffectiveness, failure or helplessness that has been impacted by a fear of loss, time pressure, coordination issues, and a feeling of giving up (hopelessness).
<b>Relatedness</b>	Experience of care, bonding, and warmth (connecting to and feeling significant to others) has been satisfied through open communication, a sense of social responsibility, trust, and the development of team involvement.	To a sense of social alienation, exclusion, and loneliness due to the lack of social responsibility, disappointment, imbalance, worrying, feeling excluded from the group, a lack of belonging and inclusion, missing solidarity, no feeling of communitas, and perceiving adjustment anxiety/social anxiety.

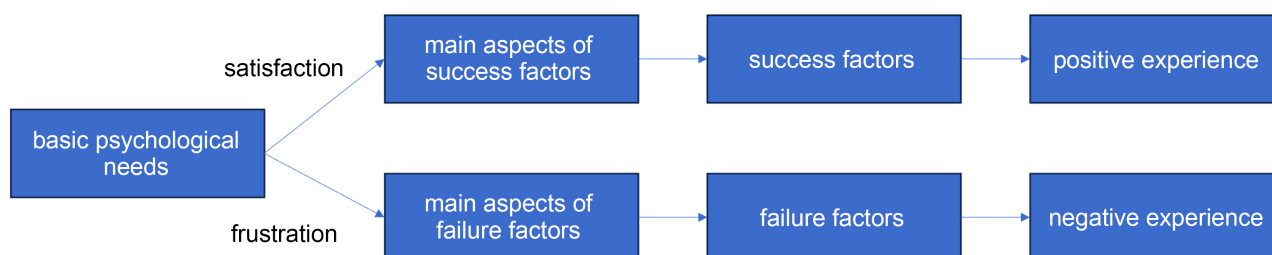
acceptance and willingness to accept change in organizational contexts and indicate that safeguarding the basic psychological needs of leaders are supported is essential to the success of any organizational change effort (Deci, Olafsen, & Ryan, 2017; Gagne, Koestner, & Zuckerman, 2000; Huang, 2022; Rahi & Ahmad, 2020). These basic psychological needs can be either satisfied or frustrated under certain social circumstances of organizational change. Hereby, frustration has been correlated with a stronger negative and more aggressive experience (perception of inefficacy, failure, helplessness) than its counter reaction, satisfaction (optimal psychological well-being). Based on this assumption, it can be argued that the experience of need-satisfaction corresponds to a leader's positive experience in change context, whereas need-frustration can be linked to a leader's negative experience within organizational change.

In sum, the findings of this study indicate that the main aspects of success and failure factors can be perceived as an expression of the occurrence of the underlying basic psychological needs in the specific states of satisfaction or frustration. It can be argued that the state (satisfaction or frustration) of leader's basic psychological needs are fundamental for the occurrence of main aspects of success or failure factors and further on for leader's positive or negative experience. **Figure 4** shows the framework of proposed relation between basic psychological needs and leader's experience of organizational change.

Taken this assumption into consideration, a need-supported change design can have a positive impact on organizational change outcome.

Explored requirements for need-based supported change design

BPNT provides a framework for understanding the different behaviors displayed by leaders during organizational change in the context of a multi-crisis. This framework is based on the idea that peoples' behaviors are shaped by their basic psychological needs and derived motivations, as well as by the context in which these are experienced. Hence, it has to be taken into consideration that frustration can lead to an extraordinary higher level of negative experiences (perception of inefficacy, failure, helplessness) than need-satisfaction (optimal psychological well-being) can increase the level of positive experiences. Like this, research in the context of "bad is stronger than good" argues that negative experiences carry more weight in comparison to good ones. For example, destructive leadership behaviors showed stronger positive correlation with emotional exhaustion and employees' propensity to leave and have a greater impact on negative



**Figure 4.** Framework of proposed relation between basic psychological needs and leader's experience of organizational change.

phenomena with a stronger personal meaning (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001; Fors Brandebo, Nilsson, & Larsson, 2016). With this knowledge, change management practitioners can provide need-based experiences within a change development program and need-supported change process design. Additionally, understanding the role of contextual and social influences in motivating, engaging, and adjusting leaders in organizational change in a multi-crisis context may help to satisfy their basic psychological needs (in the same way as Lewin's field theory). Therefore, BPNT provides a practical approach to study a wide range of behavior of leaders when coping with organizational change in a multi-crisis context.

#### **6.4. Final Question: How a Need-Supported Change Design Should Look Like to Improve the Chances of Leaders to Successfully Deal with Organizational Change in a Multi-Crisis Context?**

To improve the chances of leaders to successfully deal with organizational change in a multi-crisis context, a need-supported change design should consider all four levels of change: the personal, the situational, the decisional and the transitional level. Leaders express a need for community and involvement, yet less common rituals or *communitas* are practiced during the change period. Need-based support will provide an environment that helps in creating a sense of *communitas*, based on the idea of equality, mutual respect, and shared humanity among all people regardless of their social status or power. Additionally, a better understanding of the role of contextual and social influences in motivating, engaging, and adjusting leaders in organizational change in a multi-crisis context may help to satisfy their basic psychological needs. Taking into consideration that frustration can lead to an extraordinary higher level of leader's negative experiences, the management of both success factors and failure factors at any point and any level of the changing process should be a part of the design. A need-supported change design should encompass autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy should be addressed by allowing leaders to feel a sense of integrity, optimism, growth mindset, and activated motivation. Competence should be supported by creating an environment that fosters effectiveness and mastery while providing team involvement, the optimization of business processes, and the sharing of knowledge. Lastly, relatedness should be promoted through open communication, a sense of social responsibility, trust, and the development of team involvement to cultivate care, bonding, and warmth. This comprehensive approach will reduce negative experiences and create a positive atmosphere among leaders, thus increasing the chances of successful organizational change management.

### **7. Conclusion**

The conclusion consists of the theoretical and practical implications as well as the limitations and future perspectives.

### **7.1. Theoretical Implications**

This study contributes to the theory by revealing patterns of success and failure factors when managing organizational change in multi-crisis contexts. Specifically, it finds empirical evidence of the relevance of four levels of influence factors (personal, situational, decisional, and transitional) to successful change, drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Lewin's Field Theory and van Gennepe's Rite of Passage Model. It further demonstrates the different dynamics that operate within and across each level of the change process, such as fear of loss, worrying, risk of loss of control, adjustment anxiety/social anxiety, and lack of knowledge about the future state. Moreover, the research insights in this study connect the basic psychological needs theory (BPNT) to organizational change, illustrating the importance of providing need-based experiences and need-supported change designs. These results indicate that both success factors and failure factors must be considered in order to increase the overall positive experiences and reduce the overall negative experiences during organizational change.

### **7.2. Practical Implications**

This study contributes to the field of leadership development by examining the experiences and strategies of leaders in multi-crisis environments. It emphasizes the importance of considering all four levels—personal, situational, decisional, and transitional—when designing and implementing successful change initiatives. Moreover, it provides practical insight into managing organizational change effectively, by elucidating the need to address both success and failure factors throughout the transition process. By understanding the role of contextual and social influences in motivating and engaging leaders in organizational change, this research can be used to inform the development of effective strategies that support successful outcomes. Furthermore, this study stresses the importance of incorporating rituals and creates a sense of *communitas* amongst involved parties to ensure positive experiences and minimize negative outcomes. Specifically, the results indicate that recognizing and addressing individual & collective personal needs, creating clarity in the situation, forming a shared commitment to the change process, and providing rituals to carry out the transition are important success factors. In addition, failure factors such as inadequate preparation, narrowly defined goals, lack of ownership and underutilizing available resources also need to be addressed. These findings possess practical implications for organizational practitioners, as they provide an understanding of how to create need-based experiences and need-supported change process designs that will effectively support positive organizational outcomes.

### **7.3. Limitations**

There are some limitations in the study that should be carefully regarded when interpreting the results and discussing future perspectives. First, the sample of leaders might bias the results. Although various cultural aspects, the limitation

to German-speaking participants, and a wide transformation context are considered in the study, they may have an influence on the content of the leaders' statements. Furthermore, female leaders are underrepresented (37%) in the present sample. It remains unclear if women would stress different aspects of experience, various basic psychological needs and their antecedents, and consequences. Nevertheless, the amount of 46 participants and the wide range of change experiences can be regarded as a strength. While cross-cultural differences can be expected, the results of Church's study show that basic psychological needs have similarities across cultures (Church et al., 2013). The system of categories developed in the present study faces criticism that other approaches to building categories might lead to other category systems. To reduce this critique, this study utilizes a theoretical framework, a systematic research approach, and a third-party evaluation. We should also take into consideration the criticism of applying content analysis that it extracts sparse data from the richness of its context (Krippendorff, 1980) and it might be not meaningful enough to count all occurrences as being of equal value, ignoring the value of what is not said, missing nonverbal cues and illustrations, and the possible inability to interpret truth and intent (Insch, Moore, & Murphy, 1997). Content analysis in leadership research: Examples, procedures, and suggestions for future use (*The Leadership Quarterly*, 8(1), 1-25). A rigor process of data gathering, data analysis and data interpretation applied in this study can reduce the issues mentioned above. The sample size of the study (46 participants), the huge amount of data analyzed and categorized and the process of analyzing and interpreting the data with different theoretical concepts can be able to give the data appropriate meaning and evidence. The application of criteria for evaluating the trustworthiness of qualitative research was also used to assess the validity of qualitative research (Kitto, Chesters, & Grbich, 2008; Mays & Pope, 2020; Stenfors, Kajamaa, & Bennett, 2020).

#### **7.4. Future Perspective**

The examination of contextually rich experiences of leaders' dealing with change in a multi-crisis context is an important reason to use qualitative research methodology to explore the perception and judgement of leaders' regarding this phenomenon. Based on this study, researchers should expand the data by more in-depth interviews with leaders' and their followers before, during and after the change project to grasp what is there experienced in the different stages of change. There is also a need to combine these findings with data from other qualitative research and quantitative data with the aim of data triangulation. This can improve the evidence.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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