Improvisation, training and resources are key for decision making in unforeseen situations: An exploratory study of managers’ decision-making process

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ABSTRACT

Decision making under exigencies and extreme circumstances are faced by almost all firms, businesses and individuals. Smart organizations have a backup and contingency plan that is crafted for if the original plan fails to deliver. The beauty of improvisation is that it enables one to act on the spot, without any homework. The purpose of the study is to know how employees, managers and decisions makers react to challenging situations when the routine plan does not work, what is their reaction to uncertainties and if they deviate from standard operating procedures, what cost do they pay for it. Decision makers from organizations with different functions, objectives and goals were investigated. Interviews were conducted with the decision-makers and employees of diverse organizations. The data shows that improvisation, training and resources affect decision making process in unexpected situations.

Keywords
Improvisation, Unforeseen Situations, Innovation, Decision Making, Training and Development

JEL Classification
D81, M1

1. Introduction

With the emergence of technology, the business world has become so fast that a slide difference in a decision can be a disaster or a triumph (Crossen et al., 1996). Managers and decision-makers often face issues of scarce resources, time pressures and, lack of experience and knowledge in an emergency or unforeseen situation (Duxbury, 2014). The
Managers come across many unexpected situations which need quick action having no time for preparation and consultation (Wiedner, Croft, & McGivern, 2020). Business organizations’ environment is dynamic and changing. A decision cannot benefit a company in the long run (Hadida et al., 2015). Therefore, to be successful one should be strong and capable to be able to act according to the situation and taking timely decisions. Teamwork, tolerance and willingness to change, flexibility and adaptive learning help in adjusting to changing environment (Crossen et al., 1996).

In a business set up, often the decision-makers have the fear of failure which limits the ability to perform better (Yorton, 2005). Managers in a business set up are lacking in tools or training to recognize the unpredictability of their environment and to make a decision. It is important to tackle challenging situations to perform better and be a good decision-maker. Sometimes the decision-makers face conditions in which they lack resources and options to plan and execute. Under such instances, they have to take a quick and timely decision. Planning can help in reducing the intensity of hazards and exigencies, but even the most properly and carefully devised plan may not be sufficient in disastrous situations and unanticipated challenges. Out of the rational models of decision making, improvisation can respond to threats and respond accordingly. (Coccia, 2020). Improvisation is an immediate answer to threats and disasters. Thus, improvisation enables them to come up with a reasonable solution (Al Issa, 2020). Improvisation is a tactic to solve emerging problems. It is a real-time learning process (Xiang, Zhang, & Liu, 2020). Improvisation is making it up, as we go along. It is novel production, without any preparation in advance (Cunha, Gomes, Mellahi, Miner, & Rego, 2020). Thus, improvisation is guided by intuition, a spontaneous action, a creative and unplanned process to achieve a goal (Nisula & Kianto, 2018). Improvisation is derived from the Latin word “Improvisus” which means “unexpected” or unforeseen. It is a combination of intuition, creativity, and bricolage. Bricolage is to react to the arose problem with whatever is available at that moment. (Baker & Nelson, 2005). Thus, improvisation is a tool to deal with unexpected and unforeseen situations or circumstances. It has been defined as a creative and timely response to an uncertain and complex situation. It is learning by doing, like “trial and error learning”. Such learning is based on reflexivity, by drawing lessons from the past (Xiong, 2020).

Managers, employees and decision makers face difficult situations very frequently and they have issues in providing appropriate responses. In the context of Pakistan, there is lack of studies that introduces the concept of improvisation, in organizational decision making. The purpose of this study is to know how employees, managers and decisions makers react to challenging situations when the routine plan does not work. This study aims to understand the decision-making patterns in exigency and unforeseen situations. The research question guiding this study is: How managers and employees working in different
organizations react to unforeseen situations when the normal course of action is not feasible to respond and in case of an exigency.

2. Literature Review

The decision-makers are sometimes faced with a problem that requires a creative and timely response to an uncertain and complex situation. They have a lack of resources and options to plan and execute. Under such instances, they must take a quick and timely decision. Thus, improvisation enables them to come up with a reasonable solution (Al Issa, 2020). The concept of improvisation in organizations has been around for years now, but the COVID-19 pandemic has reiterated its importance and business organizations have operatized it to overcome and address unforeseen situations. For instance, a company that provides, plastic hangers transformed a part of the factory to make plastic masks for doctors and medical personnel. The owner of the factory stated that they were short of time, and proper planning required more resources to be allocated, while on the other hand, thousands of lives were at risk. The only way out for them was to stop regular production and make medical gears for doctors, in the shortest time available (Abrantes, Cunha, & Miner, 2022). Similarly, the sudden outbreak of the pandemic confined people to their homes as social gathering and contacts were lost. During that time, the Italian musicians improvised to perform from their homes, windows and balconies to maintain human connections through music Bertinetto (2022).

It is not possible to pre-plan for every problem. There are situations where timely decision making is necessary. Improvisation is a tactic to solve emerging problems. It is an ongoing learning process (Xiang, Zhang, & Liu, 2020). Improvisation is dealing with unforeseen circumstances with no time for preparation and to act with the issue at hand (Wiedner, Croft, & McGivern, 2020). Many studies have been conducted to elaborate and develop the concept of improvisation and decision making. Researchers have defined improvisation as learning by doing, like “trial and error learning. Such learning is based on reflexivity, by drawing lessons from the past (Xiong, 2020). It is making up, as we go along. It is novel production, without any preparation in advance (Cunha, Gomes, Mellahi, Miner, & Rego, 2020). Leybourne and Smith (2006), found that project managers often face situations where they must work with less information available, and lack of time compels them to act quickly. This research paper defines and explains improvisation, intuition and the link of these to project management.

The researchers claim that people with more experience improvise more than those with less experience because they can predict the outcome with their intuitions. The results show that intuition is a person’s decision-making ability along with emotional inputs. Improvisation is positively related to the experience of project managers. The more experience the better improvisation. It also shows that females are more intuitive than
males and improvisation and intuition has a positive relationship. Research has shown that practice, simulations, and experiments should be encouraged to be good at intuition. The project managers accept the fact that they do improvise when they are lacking in resources or time and if the customer wants a change in the design. However, there is a lack of evidence that shows that improvisation influences the output.

Graetz and Smith (2008), found that in the last two decades, the bureaucracy has failed to use their knowledge and skill to respond quickly and get desirable decisions. They have failed to respond to the changing technological environment and the demands of the customers. In such situations, the researchers have come up with a new form of organizing where the environment has agility and flexibility. Studies show that while this new form of organizing is making its place in the organizations, and it is more productive than traditional and centered forms, it is not easy to simply replace the old form with the new one. However, taking some of the characteristics of old and some of new form of “dual” environment can be an acceptable option. The researcher identifies five main dualities characteristics which are simultaneity, relational, minimal thresholds, dynamism and improvisation.

Holmburg and Tyrstrup (2010) came up with a study that describes 62 project leaders and managers working in a very competing environment. Usually, it is difficult to link and relate managerial roles to leadership and how they are interlinked to the overall work processes of the organization. The study describes leadership as a set of three main sense-making abilities. They are interpreting the environment, adjusting themselves according to the conditions and environment, and if necessary, solving the everyday issues and problems with temporary solutions to ease in carrying out routine activities. The researchers found that leadership is usually thought of as an activity like setting up goals or making plans and strategies and setting tasks for a coworker and then guiding and supervising them. That aspect of leadership is a short-lived view of leadership like just responding to the causes that affect you. On the contrary, leadership is a broad-spectrum long-term event-driven process that should be influenced by skills like improvisation, so to respond effectively, as needed so everyday problems and issues that companies encounter on daily basis. The second aspect as described is learnt through experience, history of the organization, organization’s culture and understanding the abilities, skills and shortcomings of the coworkers.

Humphreys, Ucbasaran and Lockett (2011) carried out a study on Embodied Leadership based on archival data and interviews in which they explored how the concept of informal storytelling has an influence on leadership and organizing in jazz. This study also distinguishes jazz from other forms of music and to know what jazz is and what is not. The paper urged that the stories should have a solid or historical background for them to make
s精致. The paper explained how the informal concept of storytelling can be used as a powerful mechanism for leadership. This provides insights into the enhancement of leadership in a dynamic environment which encourages creativity and innovation. Duxbury (2014) studied that improvisation is as frequently occurring in organizations as in theatre and is known for life-saving creativity or a last-ditch failure to plan properly. Hadida, Tarvainen and Rose (2015) conducted a study in which they emphasized the increasing influence of improvisation in organizations. It usually takes place in those organizations, which endure failure. Flach (2014) carried out a case study analysis by conducting semi-structured interviews with 24 managers in craft breweries in Brazil and Germany. Improvisation is related to art, but it may have some striking role in organizations. The study goes beyond whether improvisation is taking place in firms but has directly observed improvisation by observations and conducting interviews. It is a unique approach in a way that it not only looks for the uses of improvisation in organizations, but it also shows the destruction improvisation may bring. The study emphasises that improvisation should not be taken as a substitute for planning as it may sometimes lead to loss and chaos. Organizations should make efforts to introduce improvisation to their culture that may work if the normal routine plan fails to deliver. During the past decade, researchers have worked on organizational learning but there is no link between improvisation and organizational learning. Improvisation should be taken as a process that increases learning in organizations.

Daipha (2015) presented a study about the decisions being made at a weather forecast office. The researcher found that the officials at the weather office are observing a lot of information coming from various sources. Some of them are satellites images; some are information from other met offices. The weather is highly unpredictable, and one cannot say perfectly about the direction of the wind. And that’s where improvisation plays its role. It is important for a person working in the met office to have worked on lowered positions before being promoted to an executive position. Executives make decisions that are based on previous knowledge about the weather conditions of an area. The met offices get a “collage” of weather information and before giving the report out; they do a lot of homework to be near an actual possible condition. Thus, improvisation is guided by intuition, a spontaneous action, a creative and unplanned process to achieve a goal (Nisula & Kianto, 2018). Many researchers support the role of improvisation in the success of a product or service through utilizing new knowledge creation (Liu, Lv, Ying, Arndt, & Wei, 2018).

Improvisational not only have applications in organizations but in other sectors like the forces and militaries. (Sharkansky & Zalmanovitch, 2000) explained that improvisation can be a useful process to deal with uncertain, novel and challenging military confrontations. It is an alternative to make decisions to achieve the goal and serve as a response to the fast, rapid and unpredictable working environment they exemplify various
examples of how the concept is used in public policymaking in the State of Israel. Just after the 1967 Arab-Israel war when Israel has captured a large amount of land, they quickly started building infrastructure in the newly captured land (Glazer, 2001). As they faced strong opposition from Arab leaders, Israel worked with the local inhabitants, by allowing them to use their currency, driving licenses and educational curriculum. Other examples are of the Israeli soldiers, when reached the dome of Rock and tried to overthrow the Flag, they were restricted by the Defense Minister Moshe Dayan as it will spark outrage in the Muslim states. The wars, fighting and uncertain situations are some of the challenges that have favoured the improvisation in the state of Israel (Sharkansky & Zalmanovitch, 2000).

On the other hand, organizations responding to emergencies work in uncertain, ambiguous and very high risk environment. The emergences have become frequent in the present times, like the terrorist attacks and natural disasters, therefore, such organizations need proper and frequent trainings to have an effective response to such disasters (Roud, 2021). Also, although it is very difficult to avoid unforeseen events, yet organizational interactions, coordination and communication can help in avoiding these calamities (Rundmo, 2018). Also, with various simulations and trainings, the art to improvise could be learned, and diverse resources, intuition and experiments could be incorporated in a certain sudden situation (Bouvier-Patron, 2021).

3. Conceptual Framework

In literature, some factors affect decision making in unexpected, pressurized ambiguous situations. They are improvisation, resource management, teamwork and training and education as the main factors affecting the decision-making process. Figure 1.1. shows how teamwork, improvisation, training and education can contribute to making decisions in an unforeseen situation. Improvisation, skills, teamwork, training and education, scarceness of resources and time pressures affect decision making power. It is understood that the business environment is dynamic (Crossen et al., 1996). Uncertainties, exigencies arise in everyday life, and to tackle them to excel, one should have the training to be able to react properly. If one has the expertise, experience and training, the decisions can be more fruitful (Leybourane & Smith, 2006). The bond can be stronger if peers are comfortable communicating and work as a team (Yorton, 2005). The experience, training and level of education help employees working in an organization to make more improvised decisions (Duxbory, 2014). Improvisation is such a skill that is believed, can be learnt with practice. It is worthy to note that one cannot gain this skill overnight. Like in jazz music they have sessions of practice and practice just like traditional training (Crossen et al., 1996). Then they understand each other’s behaviour, the role they play, to compose perfect melodies. In addition to these intuitions and bricolage can also helpful (Leybourane & Smith, 2006).
Figure 1.1 Factors affecting Decision Making in Unforeseen Situations

Everyone accepts the fact that the organizational environment is dynamic and changing. A decision cannot benefit a company in the long run (Hadida et al., 2015). Therefore, to be successful one should be strong and capable to be able to act according to the situation and taking timely decisions. Teamwork, tolerance and willingness to change, flexibility and adaptive learning help in adjusting to changing the environment (Crossen et al., 1996).

4. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to know how employees, managers and decisions makers react to challenging and uncertain situations when routine plans do not work. Furthermore, we wanted to figure out the extent to which experience, training and education contributed to the improvisation during the decisions making process. To achieve our research objectives, we conducted a qualitative study because the purpose is to explore the process of improvisation during decision making in uncertain situations. The study explores the
emotions, training, circumstances and the role of authority in improvisation and as they are all subjective and qualitative terms that can better be understood using a qualitative study.

**Strategy of Inquiry**

This is an exploratory study, using a qualitative approach. The study is exploring the phenomena of improvisation during decision making and how managers improvise decisions during unforeseen situations where they must take decisions on the spot. An exploratory study is an extensive, deliberate, well-organized data collection method designed to maximize the discovery of generalizations based on description and understanding of social and physiological issues (Given, 2008). An exploratory study is investigating a phenomenon that is not well understood (Creswell, 2007). Although, we have developed a conceptual framework from the literature, which could be tested with the quantitative data in future researches, but as we wanted to explore the concept further, therefore qualitative methods are employed in this study for exploring the phenomenon under study (Stutterheim & Ratcliffe, 2021).

From the literature, it was observed that in Pakistan, the concept of improvisation needs to be unearthed. We did not find any research study in the Pakistani context that analyzed the improvisation phenomena during decision making. To contribute to the literature, we decided to choose organizations with different functions, as the goal was to understand the decision making in difficult times and not the functions and responsibilities of those organizations.

**Data Collection Methods**

Through brainstorming, we searched for possible organizations that may come across changing situations frequently and where timely decision making is vital. After a detailed analysis and observation, we chose seven organizations that were in line with our research question and objectives. Although these organizations are far different in their functioning and operations, but the concept under study is relatively novel, that needed further exploration, therefore, it was decided to look for the concept in diverse organizations and interpret whether different organizations face unexpected situations, or it is just confined to few sectors and organizations. Furthermore to validate the results and findings of the study, data was collected from diverse organizations (Noble & Heale, 2019). On the other hand, conducting interviews was an ideal method for our data collection because the concepts under study were subjective and novice, which needed to be explored. A qualitative study using an open-ended interview method can generate themes for filling the research gap and answering our research question.

For the sake of confidentiality, we decided not to disclose the names of those organizations and individuals. As per functionality they were a rescue organization, banks, broker
companies, an import-export business, a military personal who responded in a personal capacity and a cellular phone dealer.

**Sampling**

Data was collected by conducting in-depth interviews, from the employees, managers, owners and workers from seven diverse organizations, where open-ended questions were asked. Here, purposive sampling method was employed because we wanted to interview those individuals who frequently face unforeseen situation and make decisions under pressure. Also, purpose sampling provides rich information and helps in studying the phenomenon in detail (Staller, 2021). A total of 16 open-ended interviews. According to Onwuegbuzia and Leech (2005), the interviews should not be small enough that it would be difficult to reach data saturation, nor should it be too many that it is difficult to analyze the data. According to Adler and Adler (2012), the interviews should range from 12 and 60. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) suggest that the interviews between five and 25 will satisfy the purpose. Bertaux (1981) recommends up to 15 interviews, whereas Becker (2012) stated that in some cases one participant may be sufficient. All the interviews were audiotaped using an audio recorder. The duration of interviews varied from 25 minutes to 40 minutes. Before the interviews, a form of consent was signed by interviewees, which explained the ethical responsibilities, introduction of the researcher and the purpose of the study. We faced certain accessibility issues and limitations because of which the number of interviews varies in different organizations. A couple of participants were not willing to participate and therefore the number of participants varies in every organization. However, maximum possible interviews were conducted from those organizations that were more in-line with our research objectives.

It is observed that rescue organizations came across challenging circumstances more often than others. Based on these criteria we decided to carry out the maximum possible interviews which will answer our research question. The rescue organization permitted us to carry out 7 interviews with their officials. 4 interviews were conducted with bank officials, 2 from broker firms, 1 from an import-export company, 1 from a cellular phone dealer, and an interview from a military person in a personal capacity. All these interviews were face to face and in the organization’s offices except for the interview from the military personnel that was telephonic because of the unavailability of the interviewee. All the participants were male individuals. These organizations were selected because they are constantly subject to changing situations and the nature of their jobs demand a quick and sometimes on the spot response as the situation arises, that is necessary for survival.

5. **Analysis & Discussion**

All the 16 interviews recorded earlier were then transcribed via Microsoft word. No data analysis software was used, and all the data was transcribed and analyzed manually. After
transcription, the data from each interview was searched and researched for possible codes. One by one each interview was looked up for the possible codes with open coding. The relationship among the codes that emerged from the open coding of interviews was built up by axial coding. The codes with similar nature and meanings were colour coded in Microsoft word using different colour schemes. Similar colour codes were then analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is used for this research because “it is not tied to a particular epistemological or theoretic perspective. This makes it a very flexible method, a considerable advantage given to the diversity of work in learning and teaching.” (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p.3352).

Thematic networks are used for the thematic analysis of qualitative data. The thematic network facilitates the process of thematic analysis by structuring and the description of the themes. (Attride, Stirling, 2001). The thematic themes are divided into three types of themes. They are the lowest order or basic themes, organizing themes and global themes. In the first level i.e., the basic themes; are derived from the textual data. As the name suggests, the basic themes do not say much about the text. Basic themes may give us many meanings. We must go further and investigate the organizing themes. These organizing themes organize basic themes into clusters of similar problems and issues. Organizing themes are of more significance to give more abstract and “rich” meaning to the data. Further, the organizing themes that contain similar meaning are grouped into what we call global themes. This qualitative study was carried out to know the phenomena of improvisation during decision-making in emergencies and the factors that affect and influence the decision-making process. The study’s findings show that the managers come across situations in which they have to improvise a decision. Moreover, the managers emphasized that decisions are improvised if there is the support of the team, managers have proper education and training and that influences the decision-making process. Improvisation is gaining ground in modern-day organizations that follow the democratic and horizontal style of leadership. It gives employees the freedom to decide and act creatively.

**Themes**
The themes that emerged from the interview data after data analysis are (a) Supportive Team and Teamwork, (b) Proper Training and Education, (c) Resource management and (d) Improvisation. These emerged themes from the data are discussed in detail.

**Supportive Team and Teamwork**

The codes that are combined to make this theme are: support, understanding, empathy, knowledge and shared knowledge. The findings show that teamwork has a role in improvisation. Teamwork leads towards progress, because people, employees and peers
when work together can brainstorm, exchange ideas and work efficiently. It helps in making a timely decision. A participant from the military organization told that such an integrated structure isn’t possible without teamwork.

“Army believe in the concept of teamwork…. there is no individualism in the army, and also individual work cannot be much beneficial. In an organization, every individual has to play his/her part”

The respondent further stated that military improv skills can save lives.

“Sometimes you are in such a situation that if an instant decision is not taken, could make trouble. In such a situation, we make a quick decision.” He added; “We went for the armed military operation, according to information, but to contrary to our intel. found poor, miserable people so brought them to HQ and helped them instead.”

The banking officer told that there is too much stress in a banking job, so without teamwork, without supporting each other, they cannot move forward.

“Teamwork is there. If an employee is on leave, we face problems... like in any bank one person cannot manage all the things. Here in the main branch, it is very difficult for one officer to manage all the work, we have to make quick decisions”

He further added,

“If cash is short, in such situations, we have to do collaborative work to come up with ways, how to arrange cash urgently”

Rescue organizations recognize teamwork. They worked in collaboration with one another to fulfil the assigned task. A Rescue worker added;

“When we go to the emergency, we have to decide on the spot, who to be provided medical aid on the spot and who needed to be taken to the hospital. All the responsibility and decision at that moment is of the medical technician.”

Training and Education
The theme of training and education is made up of codes like basic education, job relevancy, on job training, annual training, and basic training. Training and education are the basics for any kind of organization and employment. For instance, rescue workers are trained extensively with many skill sets. A rescuer told;

“During training, we are trained to be ready for any possible situation”.
It was observed that due to unemployment, people work in fields contrary to their background in education. But it was worth knowing that they have adjusted to the circumstances.

A rescue worker told;

“I have an MSc degree in Phycology, but due to unemployment, I am working as a Rescue worker.”

Many of the participants in this study were trained, staff, like a disaster rescuer said;

“Yes, we have basic training of 6 months, in Rescue 1122 Academy Lahore. There is not only physical training but every type of training that makes us able to overcome emergencies. we are also given medical-related training”.

A fire rescuer said,

“We are told in the training that first thing first is self-security. Not to rush to a place where there is danger. Priority is to protect our lives so that we can help others”.

Another rescue worker talked about his decision-making experience, which he learnt in training.

“Sometimes in an emergency, we come to know that our equipment is not working. Like inhalator is not working, so we give the patient mouth to mouth CPR. The suction machine is not functioning. Once I went on emergency, the suction machine was out of charge. I used the manual mask to pump the water out of a patient’s mouth”.

Resource Management
A combination of codes that make the theme of resources is inventory, sources, equipment’s, and services. Resources are the assets that run the business smoothly. Its shortage can cause a disturbance in the normal operations of the business. The participants in the interview were very concerned about resource management. They have alternatives for managing the shortage.

A fire rescuer said;
“We are also told that to use the resources in such a manner that many patients are facilitated. With fewer resources, much output is appreciated”.

From the banking sector, we came to know that they have a sophisticated mechanism for managing the resources. Resources like secure instruments and stationery are provided to them after prior approval from the head office. The banking branch makes a requisition for resources, which are then provided to them. A bank officer said;

“We contact our local branches if we can’t get a response from there, then we have coordination with branches or other banks. And if they are also unable to provide us cash, then the last option is that we ask to SBP...State Bank of Pakistan”.

A cell phone dealer told that they face a shortage of resources and they have to come up with ideas to keep the business in the running stage. A cell phone dealer responded;

“We had tax tensions with the customs office...at an instance, everything of our brand was blocked. So, to look for alternatives, and to control and cover, takes time. You have to look for other plans and contingency plans. In that particular case, we imported china made mobiles from Afghanistan. Also, we increased work for other companies”.

Rescue organizations also have a mechanism for resources management. They use manual systems when resources are scarce.

“Sometimes there is a shortage of resources or some medicines are not available. Sometimes, there is a shortage of equipment. But we are medical technicians, so we need techniques to facilitate the patient. Like if one Spine board is available and patients are three, we manage it. If no spine board is there, we use anything available like we can make a spin board from the wooden pieces”.

Military organizations are encouraged and praised for their efficiency. The participant stated;

“Resources shortage, we can face...in such situation, we manage the shortage through various techniques. We have to decrease the usage of the current resources”.

This shows that organizations, businesses and individuals are very concerned about the resources and have come up with alternatives for smooth operations.

**Improvisation**

From the literature and the data gathered, the response to unexpected and unforeseen situations is improvisation. The participants of the interview were lacking in understanding
of the term “improvisation”, but they do know unexpected and unforeseen situations. A bank official said;

“Sometimes you don’t have people around to consult with, so in this situation, you have to make certain decisions alone”.

The Call Centre representative at a leading rescue organization is fully authorized to allocate as many resources as possible and manpower they feel appropriate to an emergency. An officer at Rescue organization said;

“The thing that is worth noting is that the man in the control room can allocate as many resources as he wants, even if the call turns out to be fake. No one can inquire about it from the control”.

Another rescue worker told about his rescue experience;

“There are many such examples. Once we arrived at the emergency there were 4 or 5 patients. Until the next ambulance was to arrive, the patients were getting critical. What we did is that we trained, instructed the people around how to get care of the patients”.

Similarly, many services organizations praise their employees, if they tackle an unexpected situation, in extraordinary circumstances. In the country’s central bank an officer said told

“Once there were two accounts that were not reconciling. So, I have to run a few processes in the system. I was completely novice to the software at that time, but I tried a few processes and luckily, it worked”.

Improvisation is encouraged in military organizations, too. They have their limits and boundaries, but in emergencies, they do what suits the circumstances.

“Once we received a threat from a place…. as an action when we went there and saw their condition. They were living a very poor life, so instead of any action, we brought them to Headquarter, gave them money, and food. They were our people, our countrymen, they are our defence. Its civil and military relation”.

Another export-import dealer told that in the initial days of their business, they had to fulfil every order, to give a positive gesture to their clients. He added;
“Once we took an order, and it needs to be fulfilled in urgency. But we were not having supply at that point. There were investment problems and at the same time, it was the end of the financial year. Banks were creating problems too. As a new business, we had to fulfill the order for reputation building. We knew about a cheap supplier in Islamabad. So, we purchased item in Islamabad and them brought there and provided to supplier”.

The data collected from diverse organizations and businesses shows that many factors influence the decision-making process, under unexpected situations. Improvisation, skills, teamwork, training and education, scarceness of resources and time pressures affect decision making power. It is understood that the business environment is dynamic (Crossen et al., 1996). Uncertainties, exigencies arise in everyday life, and to tackle them in order to excel, one should have the training to be able to react properly. If one has the expertise, experience and training, the decisions can be more fruitful (Leybourne & Smith, 2006). The bond can be stronger if peers are comfortable to communicate and work as a team (Yorton, 2005). The experience, training and the level of education helps employees working in an organization to make more improvised decisions (Duxbory, 2014).

Improvisation is such a skill that is believed, can be learnt with practice. It is worthy to note that one cannot gain this skill overnight. Like in jazz music they have sessions of practice and practice just like traditional training (Crossen et al., 1996). Then they understand each other’s behaviour, the role they play, to compose perfect melodies. In addition to this intuitions and bricolage can also helpful (Leybourne & Smith, 2006). Everyone accepts the fact that the organizational environment is dynamic and changing. A decision cannot benefit a company in long run (Hadida et al., 2015). Therefore, to be successful one should be strong and capable to be able to act according to the situation and take timely decisions. Teamwork, tolerance and willingness to change, flexibility and adaptive learning help in adjusting to changing the environment (Crossen et al., 1996).
Figure 1.2 Decision making under unforeseen situations.

Figure 1.2 shows the themes that affect decision making in difficult times. These themes emerged from the qualitative data that was collected in the form of interview through open-ended questions. These findings are in line with the literature on improvisation and decision making.

6. Limitations

The organizations and people aimed to interview were not available. The researcher improvised an alternative for it and interviewed different organizations and individuals with the same characteristics. Like he chooses to interview participants from the import and export business, but then as they were not available after trying many times, we interviewed businessmen from the organization that shares the same characteristics. Similarly, a photo studio did not agree to an interview, as an alternative, he interviewed a cellular phone dealer. In the organizations that were visited, the representatives were interested in qualitative studies. They said they can fill out the questions for close-ended questions but showed reluctance in participating in open-ended questions. Some of the participants were not properly educated. For their convenience, the researcher translated the questionnaire into Urdu. Also, the questions to some of the participants were translated into Pashto. The participants from a rescue organization had not been interviewed like this before for the study purpose. While some of the participants were not interested. They expressed their wish to fill out questionnaires and survey forms. Moreover, employees, organizations, and individuals in the interview settings have no or little understanding of the improvisation and its implications in the day to day operations and unexpected circumstances.

7. Recommendations

There was less available literature and research studies on decisions under unforeseen situations and improvisation in our local context. Here the decision making under unforeseen situation was observed in the organization that were not related to each other. Future research can observe decision making in unforeseen circumstances in a particular sector and related organizations. This study sets up a path for new dimensions in the decision-making process and encourages students and future researchers to study improvisation. There is a lot to be done in this regard. Many new dimensions and creative ideas can stimulate and assist managers to learn to take a stance in ambiguous circumstances. Training sessions can be arranged in firms and organizations that will help in raising awareness in managers, operational staff and leaders about the significance of improvisation with other factors like teamwork, training and education etc.
According to a famous vlogger, who upload videos on the micro media platform, “YouTube”, the reason for the extreme failure of the Arab collation army in the war with Israel was that they were not improvising, taking decisions on the spot. The Arabs were mostly monarchs, who waited for the senior leadership to command, while the Israeli military forces took on the spot decisions. That made an army one third to the size of Arab forces to win the war and capture Arab land (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jdgg0uDhrOs). Armies can learn about decision making on the spot, during warfare. Military organizations can acquire from the study, and it will help them in combating war against terrorism and enemies.

8. Conclusion

Improvisation is one of the novice concepts in businesses and firms, and international giant firms are encouraging their employees to learn it. They arrange training sessions and on the job training for their skilled manpower. The basic aim of conducting this study was to know about improvisation and whether organizations offer flexibility in decision making. Improvisation encourages flexibility but those organizations rigid in their decision making do not allow flexibility. People working in such organizations are concerned about their safety, job safety. Which limits their ability to improvise. From the literature, it was observed that in Pakistan, the concept of improvisation needs to be unearthed. We noted that no research has been conducted to analyze the concept before this study in Pakistan. Being the first of its kind, we decided to choose organizations with different functions, as the goal was to understand the decision making in difficult times and not the functions and responsibilities of those organizations. A future research study may examine improvisation and decision making in a particular firm or organization.

We have conducted this research to know the decision-making process in emergencies and the factors that affect and influence the decision-making process. We knew that factors like teamwork, training and education affect the decision-making process, but what we didn’t know was improvisation. Improvisation is gaining ground in modern organizations, that follow the democratic and horizontal style of leadership. It gives employees the freedom to decide and act creatively. Through improvisation, smart solutions can be assigned to contextual, sudden and emergent problems in a dynamic working environment. Our study shows that the more the job and life security, the more the employees and workers are willing to improvise and take decisions.
References


Rundmo, T. (2018). *Chapter 3 Is It Possible to Prevent Unforeseen Events?*


