EXPLORING FACTORS INFLUENCING WORKPLACE RESILIENCE AMONG OFFICE WORKERS

RINDA HIRUNBURANA

A THEMATIC PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF MANAGEMENT
COLLEGE OF MANAGEMENT
MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY
2023

Thematic paper
entitled
**EXPLORING FACTORS INFLUENCING WORKPLACE
RESILIENCE AMONG OFFICE WORKERS**

was submitted to the College of Management, Mahidol University
for the degree of Master of Management
on
28 April 2024

....
Miss Rinda Hirunburana
Candidate

....
Assoc. Prof. Astrid Kainzbauer,
Ph.D.
Advisor

....
Assoc. Prof. Randall Shannon,
Ph.D.
Chairperson

....
Assoc. Prof. Vichita Ractham,
Ph.D.
Dean
College of Management
Mahidol University

....
Asst. Prof. Manjiri Kunte,
Ph.D.
Committee member

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXPLORING FACTORS INFLUENCING WORKPLACE RESILIENCE AMONG OFFICE WORKERS

RINDA HIRUNBURANA   6449165

M.M. (GENERAL MANAGEMENT)

THEMATIC PAPER ADVISORY COMMITTEE: ASSOC. PROF. ASTRID KAINZBAUER, Ph.D., ASSOC. PROF. RANDALL M.SHANNON., ASSOC. PROF. Manjiri Kunte.

ABSTRACT

The study aims to uncover the key factors driving resilience among office workers dealing with workplace stress and high competition. It utilizes the SPARK model and understanding of mental health concepts to explore how resilience is applied in the workplace. Through qualitative methods involving 10 interviews with male and female office workers aged 25-45+, the research reveals the factors driving increased resilience are positive thinking, change of activity, encouragement, and "let it go" attitude. The findings suggest the need for resilience interventions to support employees' mental health and can inform organizational cultures and training sessions aimed at increasing workplace resilience.

KEY WORDS: RESILIENCE/ WORKPLACE STRESS/ HIGH COMPETITION/OFFICE WORKER/ MENTAL HEALTH

34 pages

CONTENTS

CONTENTS (cont.)

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In today's workplace, office employees encounter numerous challenges, including heavy workloads, tight deadlines, interpersonal conflicts, stress, anxiety, pressure, depression, and emotional strain within the organization (Kumal & Spell, 2023).

Resilience in the workplace is the ability to cope and thrive when faced with stressors and challenges in the work environment. There are evident-based benefits of resilience to help working individuals overcome stress in the working context. Firstly, it can enhance job satisfaction, self-esteem, and engagement among employees, as it can foster a positive outlook and a growth mindset that views difficulties as learning opportunities. Moreover, it can improve communication and innovation by encouraging open dialogue and risk-taking. Lastly, it can support the well-being and mental health of employees by reducing anxiety and burnout (Craig. H, 2019). These are the reasons why resilience in the workplace is crucial for the employees to manifest so that it can help combat workplace stress issues.

The ability to effectively navigate and overcome these challenges is essential for maintaining individual well-being and performance. Resilience, which involves bouncing back and adapting in the face of adversity, has become increasingly important in organizational research and practice. Understanding the factors that contribute to workplace resilience among office workers is crucial for promoting employee well-being, productivity, and a positive work environment.

While previous studies have identified various individual and organizational factors related to resilience in the workplace, there is a need for a deeper examination of the specific factors influencing resilience among office workers. This qualitative study aims to address this gap by exploring the lived experiences and perspectives of office workers regarding the factors that contribute to their resilience at work.

The objective of this paper is explained in the research questions below:

Research Question 1: What are the factors influencing workplace resilience among office workers?

Research Question 2: How have office workers overcome stressful events or hard times related to their working contexts?

This research uses qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, we aim to uncover the underlying themes and patterns in office workers' narratives, providing insight into the diverse factors that shape workplace resilience in this context.

The findings of this study can inform organizational strategies aimed at enhancing workplace resilience among office employees. By identifying key resilience factors, organizations can develop targeted interventions and support systems to cultivate a resilient workforce, thereby promoting employee well-being and organizational resilience in the face of challenges and uncertainties.

The research participants would be 10 active office workers in any industry aged between 25-40+ years old, comprising 5 males and 5 females. The data will be collected through semi-structured one-on-one interview sessions.

Practitioner Outcomes: These research findings will benefit companies in developing the resilience interventions for the employees to help them overcome stress in the workplace. Moreover, companies can utilize the findings by implementing their organization cultures where resilience will be easily developed. Lastly, the findings can help build the training sessions for workplace resilience which benefit any stakeholders who attend the courses.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The definition of resilience in the workplace:

The definition of resilience varies across different studies. However, the authors of this review chose to define resilience using Jackson et al.'s (2007) definition of resilience as a 'dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity.' They felt that this definition succinctly encompasses the ability to withstand, to engage and develop resources to adapt, to surmount difficulties, and finally to bounce back after a trying period, all of which have been described as facets of resilience. (Huey & Palaganas., 2020).

Similarly, resilience arise from the positive psychology. Resilience was the ability to withstand the pressure or problem and was able to handle it. Resilience could be considered as a process of adaptation against difficulties and stress. The resilience of individual tended to recover of trauma and describe a set of characteristics that help them to handle the life's challenges, so that the likelihood of an individual doing turnover tends to be low (Eley et al., 2013). Resilience allowed an individual to be successful despite being the face of adversity, as well as overcome constitutional variables such as temperament and personality (Stuntzner & Hartley Stuntzner, 2014). Comparably, resilience is defined as "the role of mental processes and behaviour in promoting personal assets and protecting an individual from the potential negative effect of stressors" (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012, p.675; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013, p.16; as cited in Baker et al., 2021). This definition underscores the importance of 'resilience' in addressing workplace challenges. It focuses on how individuals can overcome these challenges, particularly by considering flexibility as a contributing factor.

To summarize in the workplace, resilience is one of the core constructs of positive organizational behaviour (Luthans., 2002) and has been defined as positive adaptation in the face of adversity (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003; as cited in Hartmann et al., 2019).

2.2 Situations where resilience is needed in the workplace:

According to Kulma et al. (2023), employee stress arises from managerial responsibilities, interpersonal dynamics, and workload pressures (Ahsan, Abdullah, Fie, & Alam, 2009). Stress manifests in both mental and behavioural impacts, heightening negative emotions like anxiety, fear, and nervousness while reducing job satisfaction, which is influenced by executive contentment and company ownership. Consequently, significant findings highlight issues such as inadequate job design, unbearable work conditions, and a lack of support from supervisors and colleagues, which are common in the workplace.

Staff layoffs by the company are another factor that can increase anxiety in the workplace environment. Both existing and new employees may question whether the company's future stability will be compromised, leading to a sense of gloom in the workplace. As the number of employees dwindles, the morale of existing staff members decreases accordingly, which further exacerbates stress levels. Furthermore, an employee's sense of pride, as well as their relationships with colleagues and supervisors, can significantly impact their well-being. Poor relationships may breed workplace politics, increasing the likelihood of stress and anxiety, ultimately affecting one's health, and potentially influencing their decision to remain in their current position. (Hidiyah, 2018)

A third factor is differing work styles which can indirectly create challenges for employees who must collaborate, ultimately leading to feelings of anxiety. If not addressed, these differences can escalate into dilemma situations in the workplace. (Hartman., 2019)

The last situation is the insecurity experienced by service and office workers due to the stress and anxiety brought on by the global Covid-19 pandemic which has led to economic downturns and job layoffs across various sectors. This situation has prompted employees to become more competitive with each other in the workplace. (Wibowo & Paramita, 2022)

Overall, resilience is a crucial concept to help office workers reduce negative emotions, stress, anxiety, competition, and impact from the outside.

2.3 Organizational support for increasing employee resilience.

Applying a program to promote mental health in the workplace can be an asset for the workplace. The development of the SPARK model was informed by the original ABC model of Albert Ellis (Boniwell et al., 2023). This is the model to increase resilience in the workplace by intervention protocol. The SPARK model was used by applying the training process to increase the resilience of the employees.

The intervention protocol training was conducted through group coaching sessions via video conferencing using Zoom online, eight sessions per 90 minutes in four weeks. Every session encompassed a blend of instructional segments, group interactions, questioning, utilization of voice and chat functions, quizzes, virtual discussions in small groups, peer coaching, guided mindfulness exercises, and optional homework tasks.

The SPARK model, known by its acronym SPARK, breaks down reactions to stressful circumstances into five elements: situation, perception, affect, reaction, and knowledge as the figure follows:

Figure 2.1 SPARK Model and Solutions

Starting with the current situation is influenced by individual perceptions, often affecting emotions, which are automatic emotional responses. These responses then prompt subsequent behavioral reactions and learning, contributing to the accumulation of knowledge from the experience. To become more resilient in similar situations, it is crucial to initially perceive them as neutral facts, challenge one's perception of adversity,

recognize and manage automatic emotional responses, and control negative behavioural reactions. This typically results in an improved understanding of the situation and one's role within it.

Although the SPARK model can serve as a coaching tool on its own, its primary function is as an organizational framework that can effectively structure and introduce various strategies and tools intended to boost resilience. Each factor within the SPARK model is utilized to introduce pertinent resilience-enhancing strategies.

The intervention protocol (refer to Figure 1) begins with an introduction and peer coaching centered on the SPARK Resilience model, then advances to resilience skills, organized according to the SPARK Solutions model (refer to Figure 1). Start to the 1st session as "situation" which is no specific skills related to. This was introduced for a short time. Next, the 2nd to 5th sessions are structured around exploring and practising cognitive skills (refer to Perception Flexibility for ease of recall), emotional regulation skills (Affect Regulation), behavioural skills (Responsible Reaction), and meta-cognitive skills (Knowing Why) using various evidence-based strategies.

To explain the application of the SPARK model sessions, office workers experiencing anxiety, burnout, depression, or other emotional challenges will be invited to the program. They will receive guidelines aimed at enhancing their resilience knowledge. Each session will comprise eight steps: Let's SPARK, Perception Flexibility, Affect Regulation, Responsible Reaction, Knowing Why, Fast Spark, Resilience Muscles, and Team Resilience. This will enable participants in the program to develop a better understanding of resilience.

The last three sessions are dedicated to assisting office workers in applying the acquired skills within their workplace setting. Focusing on "Fast Spark", guides office workers in choosing techniques tailored to their individual needs and applicable during moments of pressure. It introduces KRAP, a reversed version of the SPARK tool, which follows the sequence of "Knowledge–Reaction–Affect–Perception." This approach is grounded on the notion that emotional regulation should precede cognitive reframing in stressful situations. Overall, the reverse SPARK model led the office workers to recover themselves after facing the stress of working well. (Boniwell et al., 2023)

2.4 Individual Strategies for Becoming More Resilient:

According to the systematic self-reflection model of resilience (Falon et al., 2021) which encompasses mechanisms for adapting to and recovering from stressful problems or traumatic situations, it is an iterative process dependent on individual ability and time. Additionally, key strategies to enhance individual resilience are applied depending on various contexts. When focusing on utilizing strategies in the workplace, there are five main strategies to explain, as follows:

2.4.1 Self-awareness

Self-reflection on our thoughts, emotions, physiological reactions, and behaviours following exposure to stress helps us become more self-aware of our reactions to life's pressures. This process is divided into three outcomes to gain an understanding of the problems faced.

Firstly, self-awareness reflection may involve the identification of cognitive, affective, physical and behavioural reactions to stressors. There will be described factors for understanding in detail that will lead to the ability to increase its resilience.

Initially understanding the interrelationships between different types of stressor reactions is crucial. For instance, having negative thoughts about oneself can result in feelings of powerlessness or withdrawal from social situations, while a faster heart rate might indicate anxiety. Therapeutic methods based on cognitive models acknowledge how thoughts affect physical, emotional, and behavioural responses, intending to help individuals understand this connection. Additionally, biofeedback interventions, which entail monitoring and controlling physiological reactions through thoughts and actions, have been found to decrease psychological symptoms related to anxiety and stress disorders. Recognizing these connections within one's response to stress is crucial for building resilience.

Next, understanding how one's personal reactions influence the behaviour of others and vice versa. This is vital for fostering and sustaining resilience. Being aware of how our actions impact others can help us maintain social connections and access support networks. Research shows that emotions can be contagious within both small groups and larger social circles, leading to either positive or negative outcomes. Emotional contagion can strengthen group bonds and foster healthy leader-follower

dynamics, thereby bolstering resilience. Conversely, the spread of negative emotions and behaviors, such as disruptive behaviour in group settings, can damage trust and isolate individuals, resulting in harmful effects on mental well-being and the crucial social support networks needed for resilience.

Another aspect of self-reflection to explore within the realm of self-awareness is recognizing personally cherished values. When it comes to strengthening resilience, acknowledging personal values can inspire actions that reflect those values, giving individuals and teams a foundation for making sense of lessons learned from adversity and evaluating coping methods for dealing with stressors. Therefore, the core of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is the recognition of personal values and the pursuit of actions that align with these values to overcome psychological challenges.

Secondly, identifying personally endorsed values can help understand whether their reaction to stressors aligns with or deviates from those values. Clarifying personal values can help during challenging times by encouraging behaviours that match those values. For example, someone valuing patience might realize that certain coping methods, like acceptance or controlling irritation, are more in line with their values, while others, such as yelling at loved ones, are not. Studies show that acting according to personal values predicts better psychological well-being compared to simply endorsing those values, highlighting the importance of understanding how values align with coping behaviours for resilience. Changing values into coping strategies guided by those values is vital for resilience development, as values can inspire and guide behaviour change and serve as a standard for assessing coping strategies. Therefore, recognizing the harmony between coping behaviours and personal values is crucial for coping insight.

Thirdly, identify coping strategies, resources, or beliefs used to resolve stress. This involves confronting issues and emotions by becoming conscious of coping strategies and approaches to surmount challenges, and subsequently assessing the outcomes of problem-solving.

Overall self-reflection and awareness are crucial methods to understand yourself and find a solution to overcome the challenges in life. This is one of the increasing resilience.

2.4.2 Trigger identification.

Trigger identification refers to a person's skill in recognizing the specific situational cues that triggered their initial stress reaction. In addition, the process of enhancing resilience, and identifying stress triggers allows individuals to utilize coping strategies and available resources beforehand, creating opportunities to effectively manage stress in current situations. To manage exam stress, university students may organize their study schedules or seek guidance from instructors ahead of the exam period. These proactive coping behaviours respond to expected challenges.

Focus on the self-reflective activity in this context may involve the identification of triggering events that have cued a stress response. The context is divided into two main tasks: understanding the overarching patterns of triggers time and context and interpretations of why these situations induce stress.

To explain the details, when faced with different stressors, individuals who are prone to self-criticism, perceive heightened criticism from others or feel less control tend to experience increased stress over time, resulting in daily decreases in positive feelings and increases in negative emotions.

One implication of these findings is that by understanding the interpretations and assumptions behind the impact of stressors, individuals may be better able to challenge or manage those interpretations and assumptions. This could ultimately strengthen their resilience.

2.4.3 Reappraisal

Reappraising stressors as opportunities for growth can lead to more positive emotional responses and greater resilience over time. This mindset is associated with various positive outcomes, including increased optimism, resilience, and life satisfaction, as well as reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety. Additionally, viewing stressors as challenges or growth opportunities is linked to greater perceived resilience even if initially perceived as negative. This highlights the importance of adaptive self-reflection, which involves considering the potential for personal development in stressful situations.

Enhancing our understanding of how stressors and adversity shape our life stories can influence how we perceive future challenges. This understanding may motivate

us to engage in activities that foster both stress and personal growth, such as pursuing education later in life.

In summary, these strategies indicate that adopting a mindset that sees stressors as opportunities for growth captures the complex role of stressors in our lives and encourages personal development, ultimately contributing to resilience.

2.4.4 Evaluation

When faced with stress Assessment involves objectively determining whether our responses are consistent with the values. Continuously evaluating coping strategies and resources. It allows individuals to develop a deeper understanding of their effectiveness. From these assessments, People decide whether to continue or abandon a particular coping method. In this situation, reflecting on oneself may involve evaluating how helpful previously adopted coping strategies or resources are.

Firstly, the understanding of the nuance of interaction between characteristics and effective coping strategies or resources shows that problem-solving is most effective when the situation allows for direct action. Conversely, emotion-focused coping strategies such as cognitive reappraisal or disengagement-focused strategies like avoidance may be more effective when the stressor is unavoidable or beyond control. This understanding of how coping strategies align with different stressor characteristics can enhance resilience by fostering a nuanced comprehension of coping within specific contexts.

Secondly, the understanding of the potential for coping strategies to be associated with distinct or even oppositional short-term and long-term outcomes. This means the temporary and context-specific benefits of strategies usually seen as harmful, like counterproductive work behaviour and procrastination, are underlined. This view stresses the need for ongoing modifications to coping approaches, including even those considered effective but may lose their effectiveness if used excessively or without adaptation over time (e.g., initially accepting a demand but later becoming complacent).

Thirdly, the understanding of nuance interaction between an individual's strength and the effectiveness of coping strategies or resources. This means acknowledging one's unique strengths and abilities can enhance resilience by fostering beliefs linked to resilience, like coping self-efficacy and self-esteem, and by improving

coping effectiveness through the utilization of individual strengths in selecting and applying coping strategies.

2.4.5 Future focus

The future focus phase includes two main self-reflective actions. The first is to recognize how one's capacities of resilience may be maintained, changed or optimized in the future.

To explain a solution or strategies that may increase the reflector's capacity to live consistently with values and achieve relevant goals. Thus, how effectively resilient capabilities are utilized depends on factors such as the nature of the stressor. For example, some people face continual rejections when applying for jobs, some people continue because they see it as a source of hope, helping them deal with challenges. Acknowledging this aspect is thought to enhance resilient outcomes by allowing individuals to predict which abilities will best align with their personal needs, strengths, and the particular demands they anticipate.

Another strategy, reflecting on the challenging situation may involve recognizing the coping resources that may support one's capacities for resilience in the future. This means understanding the congruence between the type and source of coping resources available, and the anticipated needs of individuals in their future stressor situation. (Falon et al., 2021)

CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Primary data collection method

Based on the review of existing literature, which comprises information gathered from published sources such as journals, Chapter 2 of this paper presents various aspects of resilience in the workplace. This includes definitions of resilience, situations where resilience is crucial in the workplace, organizational support mechanisms aimed at enhancing employee resilience, and individual strategies. However, to substantiate the findings of this thematic paper, primary data is required. Obtaining responses based on real-life experiences can offer an in-depth understanding of feelings, perspectives, and motivations related to the research question. Therefore, employing qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews, is deemed appropriate in this thematic paper.

The professional experiences of office workers provide the author with valuable insights into the broader landscape of resilience in the workplace.

3.2 Interview Method

The interview methodology will be utilized to gather primary data for this paper, capturing detailed insights through interactive communication in the form of question-and-answer sessions. Further details regarding the interview methodology will be presented below.

3.3 Sample Selection

For this thematic paper, 10 interviewees have been selected, all of whom are office workers experiencing significant pressure, high competition, and anxiety and facing burnout in their jobs. These office workers have been grouped based on gender,

position, and age, resulting in three distinct groups. For instance, Group 1 consists of individuals with 3-7 years of experience, Group 2 comprises those with 7-15 years of experience, and Group 3 includes individuals with 15 or more years of experience. It is worth noting that all interviewees come from different industries, positions and organizations.

Table 3.1 Table Interview list

Code	Position	Gender	Experience	Age
A	Head of Industry Vertical	Male	37 years	58
B	Account director	Female	25 years	52
C	Chief of Operation Officer	Male	8 years	31
D	Assistant Sale manager	Male	9 years	31
E	Senior Account manager	Female	20 years	48
F	Senior Sale & Marketing Manager	Female	8 years	31
G	Senior interior designer specializing	Male	7 years	31
H	Senior Marketing Executive	Male	6 years	33
I	Assistant Senior Architecture	Female	5 years	30
J	Senior Account Executive	Female	3 years	28

3.4 Interview questions

To uncover the real-life experiences of office workers dealing with issues like stressful situations at work, high responsibility, high pressure/competition, suffering, and lack of support from the company, as well as to explore the factors influencing workplace resilience among them, a set of open-ended questions has been curated. These questions are designed to encourage interviewees to share their stories more openly and freely. The table provided below outlines the list of open-ended questions aimed at understanding the factors contributing to workplace problems.

Table 3.2 Interview questions

Factors to investigate	Open-ended Questions
Stressful situations at work	• Can you describe a time when you felt overwhelmed/stressed at work? What happened? What made you stressed and why? • What specific types of stressful situations commonly occur in your work? • How do you typically respond to stressful situations in the workplace? Can you give examples? • What strategies do you use when faced with stressful situations at work? • What factors tend to make your stress worse? what factors tend to reduce your stress? You can think of factors related to your organization or related to yourself/your own attitude?
Highly competitive work	• Have you ever experienced stress due to highly competitive environments within your workplace? • What aspects of your highly competitive role contribute to your stress? • How do you adapt your behaviors and attitudes to thrive in highly competitive work settings? • How do you balance the pressure to perform in a highly competitive environment with maintaining your mental well-being and resilience?
Resilience - Individual strategies	• Resilience is the capacity to successfully adapting to difficult situations or to recover quickly from difficulties – would you consider yourself a resilient person? On a scale from 1 to 10 (1=low and 10-high), how resilient do you think you are? • What makes you resilient? • From your personal experience, what recommendations would you give to others on how to become more resilient?
Organizational support for increasing the resilience	• Does your company provide any support that helps you to be more resilient? Can you give examples?

3.5 Develop probing technique:

In the interview process, probing techniques are essential for gathering more detailed information from respondents. Initially, open-ended questions are used to encourage respondents to freely share their thoughts and experiences. Following this, probing techniques are employed to delve deeper into the responses and uncover underlying reasons or motivations. These techniques allow the interviewer to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the respondent's perspective and gather valuable insights. Finally, closing questions are asked to ensure clarity and confirm understanding between the interviewer and interviewee regarding the information discussed in each specific question.

3.6 Conduct the interview

When it comes to conducting interviews, engaging in interactive face-to-face conversations proves to be an effective method for gathering information. However, some interviewees may prefer phone calls or video interviews for their convenience. Yet, conducting interviews over the phone has its limitations as it lacks the visual cues and gestures of the interviewees. Nonetheless, some interviewees express a preference for in-person interviews. The interviews take place at their respective companies, as they are familiar with the environment and find it convenient to provide insightful information for the paper. Each interview lasts approximately 30-50 minutes, covering introductions and probing questions.

3.7 Research Framework

The research framework will elucidate how the information gathered from in-depth interviews addresses the stressfulness of work and the high level of competition, while also examining individual strategies employed to foster high resilience. Qualitative research, employed in this study, aims to identify the factors involved, including the challenges and obstacles experienced by office workers in the organization. Moreover, it explores the interconnectedness between the perceptions of office workers and management style. For example, office workers may provide solutions to overcome new

challenges within the company and achieve their goals by balancing their resilience. Therefore, the research model illustrating the relationship between these four discovery factors is presented in the Figure.
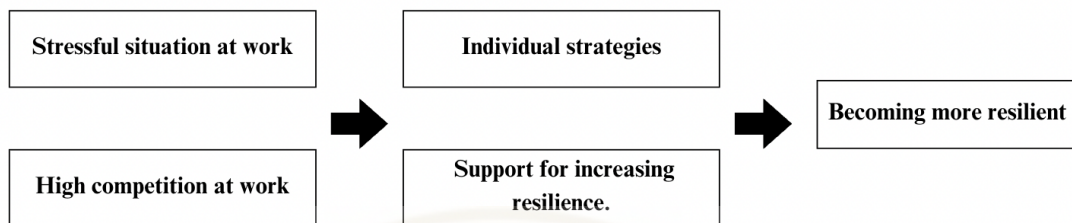
Figure 3.1 Research Framework

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

After employing the qualitative research method to interview participants, the data findings from the sample interviews were analyzed. Five main topics are discussed in this chapter: The factors that cause stress in the workplace, Stress due to high competition in the workplace, Resilience self-assessment of interviewees and Organizational support to become more resilient

4.1 The factors that cause stress in the workplace

4.1.1 Managing people:

This factor's impact on stress, according to those interviewed, is people. There are 7 interviewees of mentioned these findings such as Mr A, Mrs B, Mr C, Mr D, Mrs E, Ms F and Ms J. The description will be explained as follows.

4.1.1.1 Distributing work among subordinates without bias: According to Mr A, the head of the industry vertical has different subordinate abilities teams. He said, "Managing people with different abilities to work towards a common goal is the most challenging aspect of a team because it will seem very biased if people whose work is not good do not get the assignment; however, we prioritize the target at the 1st priorities and coherence in the goals of company" This is an important factor in managing people to prevent them from feeling biased, which can lead to stress during work.

4.1.1.2 Managing external stakeholders: Mrs. B and Mrs. E both encountered a shared problem: the contractor hired from outside didn't complete the work on time, leading to delays in achieving the company's goals and increased expenses. This situation creates stress at work, given the importance of their image and positions. Any delay in achieving operational results could harm their reputation and the company's image, reflecting on their abilities.

4.1.1.3 Employee rotation within the company: Additionally, Mr C frequently encountered new colleagues from various departments and third-party collaborators to cooperate with. He expressed "I sometimes felt headache by the need to constantly adjust to new people, as it disrupted the workflow." He must adapt his operational methods each time a change occurs.

4.1.1.4 Getting cooperation from individuals within the company: To explain Mr D said, "The delivery was not processed due to errors in the work of team members, and the Shipping department is not cooperating with them because there was an error in the negotiations." This induces feelings of anxiety and stress for him because he must achieve to deliver it; otherwise, the customer will not pay for the service. If this occurs, it will lead to his reporting to the supervisor, directly impacting his work evaluation.

Similarly, Ms. J recently faced a setback in her customer relationship because the sales executive failed to provide her with effective data and the colleague refused to send it again. The problem stemmed from her colleagues' confidence in the data's quality, while the customer feedback suggested otherwise. This led to considerable stress for her, impacting her performance.

4.1.1.5 Managing older subordinates: Ms. F is a senior sales and marketing manager who got promoted to the position very quickly, and she must manage a subordinate who is older than her. She said "My team did not listen to me because I am younger than her, and I had to let the problem happen before she would listen to me. This is what causes her to waste time doing redundant tasks. The primary factor causing her stress is her team's lack of confidence in her abilities, which in turn affects her position.

4.1.2 Handling disagreement:

Mrs B, an account director must communicate and encourage the stakeholders and subordinates to deliver work on time to customers both internally and externally even though some stakeholders disagree with her opinion. She had to handle the different of opinion office workers by communicating effectively while maintaining the customer relationship at the same time. Similarly, Mrs. E said, "I had to coordinate within my team to understand in the same direction." The team holds divergent opinions,

which represents a common challenge faced by large companies operating in similar industries.

Another case, Ms. J, as a Senior Account Executive, needs to engage with customers to ensure optimal communication consistently to prevent customer disagreement with the project offer.

4.1.3 Achieving the target of the company:

This factor that affected the interviewees' stress was "Achieving the target of the company". This was an important factor that everyone (10) interviewed said. The details will be described as follows:

4.1.3.1 Achieving the target revenue: The example of the interviewee is Mr. A, the highest experience and position on the list. He said "Amidst this, I have to oversee subordinates within a large team, as well as report work results to the higher position in top management meetings. The target I am tasked with is achieving sales of 2 billion baht, which adds significant stress to my role as an enterprise account leader. To reach this goal, several factors come into play such as the abilities of the team members, to enable the team to achieve the target, the relationships of his internal and external customers, and other related factors." This is the most challenging and highly stressful goal among those interviewed.

• 6 interviewees said they must achieve revenue depending on the position and size of the company. Mrs. B & E, the account director and senior account manager respectively, worked on the same team in a large company. They expressed similar sentiments, stating, "We need to prioritize achieving the target revenue while also nurturing customer relationships. Additionally, we must compete with other companies to win project bidding assigned by top management" This is very challenging and high responsibility for the office workers to get stressed easily.

• 3 interviewees work in sales positions directly such as Mr D, Ms F and Ms J. They must achieve the target every month. For instance, Mr D said "The target income is a major concern for me if it is not met each month. Factors affecting my sales include the domestic and international economy. This is difficult for me to control. However, I must achieve my team's total revenue target. Otherwise, my abilities will immediately be questioned." This is challenging for a sales position. Similarly, Mr

H a senior marketing executive created and supported the sales position for achieving revenue through the marketing plan. This can pressure him indirectly even though the sales executive would not achieve the revenue for the company.

4.1.3.2 Achieving the target performance: On the contrary, Mr. C, the Chief Operating Officer, did not directly focus on the company's revenue. Instead, he focuses on to prioritize the quality of operational performance to meet the team's targets such as the project must be delivered to the customer according to the timeline. Therefore, he suggested that the subordinate could help him to achieve the company's goal. Thus, the factor of his stress depends on the quality of work and the delivery on time. This was one of the qualifications he thought the office workers should have.

4.1.3.4 Responsibilities not included in the agreement: Next to the less experienced interviewee, Ms J, a senior account executive who worked on maintaining customer relationships. She explained "Considering the current team situation, I have received a new goal in my new role: to establish greater revenue as a sale within the team. This task was not initially part of my job description, but I feel compelled to address it. This adds pressure because my primary product revolves around online advertising, which poses quite a challenge for me." This target is quite high for her to achieve while she must maintain the customer to continue the company contact at the same time.

4.1.3.5 Unrealistic goals: In contrast to the different industries, Ms I and Mr G worked in the design role, and the target did not focus on finances or revenue. The target is focused on customer acceptance of the project. For example, Ms I is an assistant senior architect in a famous design company in Thailand. She felt under immense pressure because she and the team received a new project during COVID-19, and everyone had to work from home. She said "I felt very frustrated as the project kept getting revised repeatedly, giving the impression that the CEO was leading us in the wrong direction. Ultimately, the project was put on hold after the client rejected the work because it did not align with their expectations. I understand that leaders aspire to achieve great things, but they often fail to assess whether those goals are realistically achievable. During that period, everyone on the team was exhausted and overwhelmed by the project" This indicates her relief after the project was halted by the arrival of the new CEO.

4.1.4 Unfamiliar responsibilities:

In the interview, Mr C. mentioned taking responsibility for managing a newly formed team within a large company. He is tasked with duties that he is not familiar with such as after-sales customer service, which presents a significant challenge for him. However, he relies on setting goals as a foundation to achieve his objectives.

4.1.5 Individual strategies to cope with stress at work.

Moving to the responding and individual strategies, the interviewees have four methods of handling the stressful situation. The strategies will be described as follows:

4.1.5.1 Positive mindset to cope with the stress at work: Every interviewee expressed the same sentiment: that maintaining a positive outlook is crucial for effectively coping with stress. For example, Mr A suggests, "When I received the challenging target of 2 billion to achieve, it is not easy to stay motivated. However, maintaining a positive mindset drives me to believe that the target is achievable."

The rest of the interviewees said the same keyword "A positive attitude is very important to work during they are facing stress" This can suddenly reduce all of the interviewees' ability to cope with stress at work.

4.1.5.2 Taking breaks to relax during stressful situations: There are five interviewees: Mrs. B, Mrs. E, Ms. F, Mr G and Ms. I. They suggest that taking a break can help them relax after dealing with a stressful situation. For example, Ms. F said, "I would change activities suddenly when I was overwhelmed by the situation, such as talking to close colleagues about a fun topic to help me feel better." The rest of the interviewees said similarly that changing the activities is the best way to deal with such as drinking a coffee, going outside to breathe fresh air, eating a snack etc.

4.1.5.3 Calming down: Therefore, four interviewees, Mr. A, Mrs. B, Mr. C, and Mrs. E, stated that "calming down is one solution to reduce stress effectively," implying that when encountering stress during work if you calm down and consider what you have encountered and how to find a solution, your stress will be reduced.

4.1.5.4 Mindfulness: Lastly, mindfulness was emphasized as an effective method to reduce stress by five interviewees: Mr. A, Mrs. B, Mr. D, Mrs. E, and Ms. J. Mindfulness helps everyone facing problems or stressful situations to find

solutions and overcome challenges. It is considered crucial for every employee to possess this ability, as it enables effective problem-solving.

4.2 Stress due to high competition in the workplace

On this topic, five of the interviewees were less inclined to discuss it. Only some of them openly stated that there is both direct and indirect competition at work. Details of the conclusions drawn from this experience are described below.

4.2.1 High direct and indirect competition:

There are five of the interviewees openly admitted during the interviews that competitive workplaces are commonplace. The experience's interviewees will describe as follows:

Mr. A said "Competition is common in large companies. In my position, I will be under pressure to achieve the company's goals promptly. Regardless of the obstacles that may arise, I must overcome them. Otherwise, the evaluation results will be taken into consideration by the executive board. Being in a relatively high position feels natural to me. Therefore, competition within my team may arise. If conflicts arise within my team, the account director must manage them instead of me, as I am focused on fulfilling my responsibilities for the company's success" This is the idea of the top executive in a large company.

In addition, Mrs. B and Mrs. E spoke similarly because they were in the same team and company as Mr A, just in different positions and teams. Mrs B said "I'm constantly faced with friendly competition between teams because I have to balance both maintaining customer relationships and achieving company goals. However, I don't put too much emphasis on competitive forces. Instead, I focus on fulfilling the company's objectives. When goals are accomplished, I carry out my duties with incentives, such as rewards, which also benefits the team member's success." Plus, Mrs E said "Even though my position is as a senior account manager, our goals align closely with what Mrs. B mentioned. We constantly face strong competition from various teams, including rival competitors. When I must participate in bidding for a company, everything boils down to securing the assigned position. Competition in this context is considered normal."

Three of the interviewees faced highly competitive situations, with the root cause being similar: high targets and significant responsibilities depending on their respective positions.

Furthermore, Ms F, a senior sale & marketing executive said "The competition exists everywhere. There is internal competition, as well as clear external competition. It depends on how we deal with it, and I can handle it well because I enjoy challenging work. Despite experiencing some pressure, I make sure to manage myself so that the work is completed promptly."

Hence, Mr D, the assistant sales manager and the current owner of the application platform, who has experience in large companies in 5 years said "Some coworkers persistently undermine him behind his back and falsely report his work performance to the boss" This affected his image and position indirectly.

Conversely, Mr C believes that "I think there is no competition within my team because I create the team by myself. However, I am unsure if there is competition between teams. I mainly focus on achieving targets, and I am a perfectionist, putting the utmost effort into every task." This can observe that we do not need others as competitors; we just compete with ourselves. This individual was able to handle the situation well.

4.2.2 Adaptability and attitude during high competition at work

4.2.2.1 Set personal goals: Starting with adjusting behaviour-wise, every interviewee suggested the same answer as setting their own goals and taking responsibility for the assigned tasks while adapting to them. Regarding attitude, the recommendation is to primarily focus on oneself and compete with oneself rather than comparing oneself to others.

4.2.2.2 Self-reflection: Next, five interviewees said that self-reflection helps them recognize their strengths and weaknesses, enabling us to understand how to improve their abilities and adjust their thinking. For instance, Mr A mentioned that to ensure the success of his work, he consistently evaluates himself, identifying areas of success and areas needing improvement. This allows him to tailor his approach to suit the needs of each team member.

4.2.2.3 Communicate directly: Lastly, seven interviewees recommend that communicating directly is very important for working together. This

can drive the office workers to overcome the high competition situation well. For instance, Mrs D faced a conflict of communication with her colleagues. She said "I have to communicate directly with them because work is the priority that must be completed on time. Even though we compete, I am professional enough not to let those things affect me" This shows that communication directly is the one solution to adjust everyone who works in the high competition to achieve the company's goal together.

4.2.3 Individual strategies to cope with high competition at work

4.2.3.1 Let it go: Every interviewee said "Let it go" is very helpful to face the pressure, driving them towards achieving work-life balance in high-pressure environments and fostering resilience and good mental health in the workplace. Although it can be challenging at times if everyone practices these principles, they can overcome any challenge life throws their way.

4.2.3.2 Enjoy the work: There are three interviewees said in a similar way that enjoying the work can help them to be happy. For example, Ms. F said, "I love working I always think enjoying the work received helps me to stay valuable, if I did not have the assignment, I think I would be considered terminated from my job" This can be observed in her answer that she also find the solution to balance her work life and mental health

4.2.3.3 Separate work and personal: Firstly, five interviewees mentioned the same way "Separating the work and personal is very matter to work-life balance in high competition at work" For example, Mr A suggested that "We must first understand the work context and keep personal matters separate. Emotions should not influence our work decisions. It's crucial to clearly distinguish between work and personal life and know when to let go when necessary. This approach enables us to achieve the best balance and find happiness in our work." This reflects the lifestyle of the highest-position individual interviewed.

Focusing on Mrs B & E said similarly "When working, focus solely on work and clearly distinguish between work and personal matters. Avoid taking work problems home with you when you encounter them. Instead, strive to resolve issues promptly.

4.2.3.4 Positive attitude to cope with high competition: This finding was mentioned by Mr. A, Mr. C, and Mr. H. These interviewees develop a positive attitude by using certain phrases as follows: Firstly, Mr. A said, "Believe in yourself that you can do it." This quote emphasizes the importance of self-confidence. Secondly, Mr. C said, "Maintain a fresh attitude, expect the best, prepare for the worst, and let go of what others think." This advice suggests being proactive and adaptable in facing challenges. Lastly, Mr. H said, "We cannot avoid the highly competitive situation, think of your colleagues as your teachers." This demonstrates his positive approach to working in a competitive environment.

4.2.3.5 Fighting back: This finding was mentioned by Mr D that "Being strategic in handling workplace challenges will help you persevere. Avoid giving up too quickly." This can learn the phrase that the office workers should be stronger.

4.3 Resilience self-assessment of interviewees

In this topic, the individual strategies utilized by 10 interviewees have been self-assessed for resilience in the workplace, including various recommendations from experienced individuals who have overcome challenging periods. Details will be explained below.

Lowest resilience score: Ms. F, a senior sales & marketing manager who works in a Japanese company, rated her resilience as 6/10 because sometimes she lacked confidence in quickly bouncing back.

Popular resilience score: Six interviewees, including Mr. A, Mrs. B, Mr. C, Mrs. E, Mr. G, and Mr. H, rated their resilience level as 7 out of 10, constituting 60% of the total interviewees. They attributed their ability to overcome stress and high competition to their positive attitude and quick adaptability. Furthermore, Mrs. I and Mrs. J rated themselves as 8 out of 10, expressing confidence in their ability to let go of problems.

Highest resilience score: The highest resilience was reported by Mr D, who said, "I am very confident and tackle every challenge in my life, enabling me to recover quickly." This accounts for the individual resilience results among the 10 interviewees.

4.4 Recommendations to become more resilient.

4.4.1 Empathy:

Scoping of resilience in the workplace while Mr A is working as a director who manages a lot of subordinates below him in the large company. He advised the main keyword "empathy and depend on the experience" for the colleagues. This shows that understanding each other is very important for working with different colleagues' backgrounds and resilience.

4.4.2 Receiving Rewards and Encouragement:

Mrs B and F, employees who work in the same company as Mr A, provided feedback with the reason: "The reward motivates us to become more resilient and recover after feeling powerless from work. The details of the rewards in our company depend on the position you hold. For example, if you are an account director or higher position, you will receive an expensive leadership course. Senior account managers will receive a travel package, coupons, or discounts on company products, which the account director will also receive.

4.4.3 Positive mindset to cope with the problem:

Every interviewee recommended positive thinking in the workplace, emphasizing its crucial role in increasing resilience.

4.5 Organizational support to become more resilient

Based on interviews with employees from small, medium, and large companies, it can be inferred that most Thai companies will not value mental health directly except the large companies. This means the emphasis on fostering resilience has not been widely recognized. In the subsequent section, the explanation is elaborated on companies that actively promote the development of resilience.

4.5.1 Recreation facilities:

There are three companies from the interviews that provide recreational facilities such as a massage room, hairdressing salon, relaxation area, recreational section, and for employees to utilize in reducing stress and enhancing resilience based on individual objectives.

4.5.2 Online mental health:

Two companies provide online mental health services and offer a dedicated doctor's suite to address stress-related issues. For instance, Mr. C's company offers the UGA online mental health platform, which allows scheduling direct mental health consultation appointments.

The rest of the companies from the interview typically lack support in this area, leaving many employees to find solutions on their own. This aspect is still lacking, particularly in smaller organizations. In the experience of this interview context of companies, the large company explicitly emphasises on resilience for the office workers more than the small to medium company.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

In this paper, the research questions focus on investigating the stressful situations at work, the high competition at work, individual strategies, recommendations to become more resilient, and organizational support provided to employees to become more resilient in the workplace. These inquiries are addressed through interviews conducted with 10 interviewees, comprising 5 women and 5 males with varying levels of experience and positions across small, medium, and large companies. As a result, I have organized and summarized the primary points as follows:
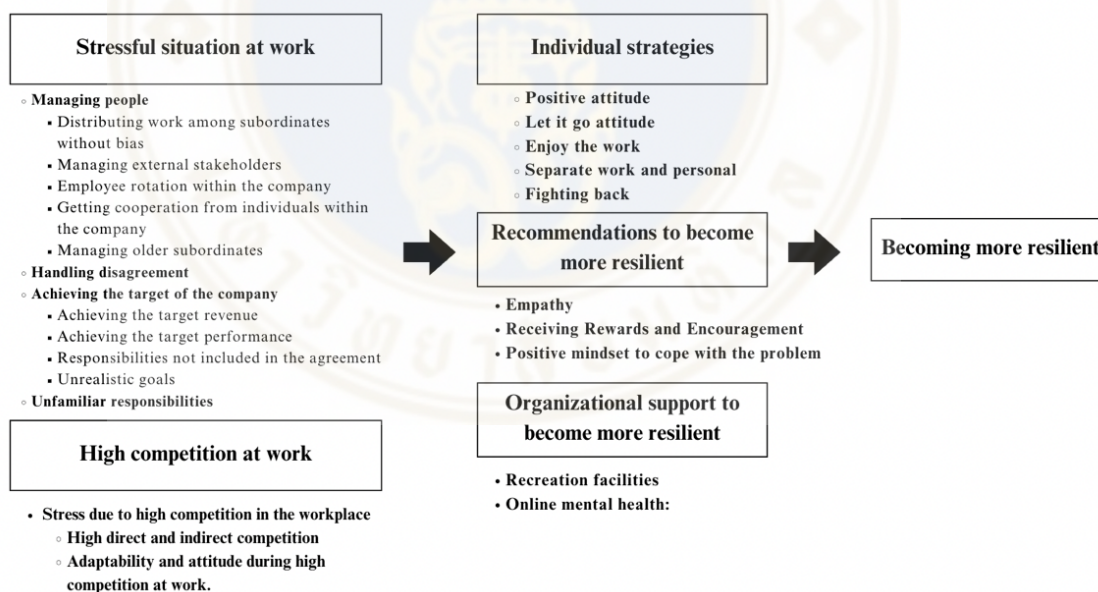
Figure 5.1 Summary of the research

The findings show that stressful situations at work come from the following factors: Managing people, handling disagreements, Achieving the targets of the company, unfamiliar responsibilities, high direct and indirect competition and adaptability and attitude during high competition at work. This is the main of factor to face in the general of office workers nowadays.

The individual strategies that people use to overcome stress are the following: Positive attitude, Let it go attitude, Enjoy the work, Separate work and personal and Fighting back. These is the strategies to overcome the dilemma situation or the people who feel overwhelmed about their work.

The suggested organizational support includes recreation facilities and online mental health. The research results are summarized in Figure 5.1 above.

Through the comparison of qualitative research and literature review, it is apparent that many of the factors discovered through both methods exhibit similarities.

According to Kumal & Spell, (2023), research on work-related issues like heavy workloads, tight deadlines, and interpersonal conflicts result in anxiety, negative emotions, burnout, pressure, and heightened competition. In comparison with the interviews, it was noted that interviewees also brought up these concerns. However, there may be additional issues such as a lack of cooperation among colleagues, disagreements, the target of the company, and differing opinions.

Additionally, individual strategies mirror those found in the literature review (Falon et al.,2021). For instance, Mrs B and D, who work on the same team, highlighted the importance of self-reflection and self-awareness in effectively collaborating with colleagues in different positions. They emphasized the need to understand the source of stress, reappraise performance, and focus on future abilities. They also mentioned the significance of adopting a mindset of "Let it go" to improve their outlook. This indicates that all interviewees have developed their own coping strategies to manage stress and high competition. However, support from organizations is often lacking in small to medium-sized companies. Instead, assistance is provided through online applications to employees, similar to the SPARK model discussed in the literature review (Boniwell et al., 2023). This training aims to empower employees facing high stress and competition to address their challenges, ultimately enhancing their resilience.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the research, it is evident that workplace stress and high competition are prevalent for the interviewees. Therefore, the study proposes the following recommendations and combines the SPARK model (Boniwell et al., 2023) and individual strategies mentioned in Chapter 4 to guide employees who encounter these issues, aiming to help them prevent or mitigate stress and effectively manage themselves at work.

5.2.1 Recommendations for dealing with stress and high competition at work

Regarding stress at work and high competition, everyone develops their own strategies to enhance resilience and overcome these challenges. The summary of insights on dealing with stress will be described in the recommendation as follows.

5.2.1.1 Provide mental health training according to the SPARK model to employees: According to the SPARK model to employees: From the analysis of the literature review and interviews with individuals from diverse careers, positions, and companies, it can be concluded that in stressful situations, it is important to first regulate your emotions before engaging in cognitive reframing. These are important skills that office workers should practice, in order to increase resilience.

5.2.1.2 Self-reflection and awareness during stressful situations: Referring to the literature review and recommendations from the interviewees, it seems that being aware of the situations happening in the workplace is very important to truly understand the problem. This enhances resilience by allowing individuals to learn through self-analysis of real cases.

5.2.1.3 Understand and evaluate triggers: Taking short breaks while working amidst high stress and competition can help enhance mindfulness and prepare oneself to prevent stress by evaluating the root cause of stress in the workplace. This is a tip for increasing resilience.

5.2.1.4 Plan future focus: In addition to coping with high stress and intense competition nowadays, it is crucial to focus on planning for the future to prevent these problems from occurring. Therefore, this includes self-reflection on the past to analyze the causes, as well as finding solutions to solve problems. This can also increase resilience.

5.3 The Limitations of this study

The limitation of this study is the small sample size and the focus on only 2 aspects explored, namely stress and high competition at work and individual resilience to overcome them. The results therefore may not provide solutions to all office worker issues and can only be used as a partial examples for workplace resilience.

REFERENCES

Baker, F. R. L., Baker, K. L., & Burrell, J. (2021). Introducing the skills-based model of personal resilience: Drawing on content and process factors to build resilience in the workplace1. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 94*(3), 458-481. https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12340

Boniwell, I., Osin, E., Kalisch, L., Chabanne, J., & Abou Zaki, L. (2023). SPARK Resilience in the workplace: Effectiveness of a brief online resilience intervention during the COVID-19 lockdown. *PloS one, 18*(3), e0271753. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0271753

Connor, K. M., & Davidson, J. R. (2003). Development of a new resilience scale: the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). *Depression and anxiety, 18*(2), 76–82. https://doi.org/10.1002/da.10113

Craig, H. (2019, January 16). *Positive workplace: Resilience in the Workplace: How to Be Resilient at Work*. Retrieved from https://positivepsychology.com/resilience-in-the-workplace/

Eley, D. S., Cloninger, C. R., Walters, L., Laurence, C., Synnott, R., & Wilkinson, D. (2013). The relationship between resilience and personality traits in doctors: implications for enhancing well being. *PeerJ, 1*, e216. https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.216

Falon, S. L., Kangas, M., & Crane, M. F. (2021). The coping insights involved in strengthening resilience: The Self-Reflection and Coping Insight Framework. *Anxiety, Stress, & Coping, 34*(6), 734–750. https://doi.org/10.1080/10615806.2021.1910676

Ghandi, P., Hejazi, E., & Ghandi, N. (2017). A study on the relationship between resilience and turnover intention: with an emphasis on the mediating roles of job satisfaction and job stress. *Bull. Soc. R. Sci. Liege, 86*, 189-200.

Hartmann, S., Weiss, M., Newman, A., & Hoegl, M. (2019). *Resilience in the workplace: A multilevel review and synthesis*. Applied Psychology. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12191

REFERENCES (Cont.)

Harvard Business Review. (2021). *The secret to building resilience.* Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2021/01/the-secret-to-building-resilience

Hidayah, F. (2018). If you can survive, then you will stay: Resilience and Turnover Intention on Employees. In *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research (ASSEHR)*, 304, 76.

Huey, C. W. T., & Palaganas, J. C. (2020). What are the factors affecting resilience in health professionals? A synthesis of systematic reviews. *Medical Teacher, 42*(5), 550–560. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2020.1714020

Indeed Editorial Team. (2023). *Resilience in the workplace: How to develop and maintain it.* Retrieved from [https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/resilience-in-the-workplace]

Kumar, A., Gadgil, A. A., Prasad, K. D. V., Kumar, M. N., & Vemuri, V. P. (2023). Supporting mental well-being in the workplace - A study. *Journal for Re Attach Therapy and Developmental Diversities, 6*(2s), 338-345.

Positive Workplace. (2023). *The importance of resilience in the workplace.* Retrieved from https://positivepsychology.com/resilience-in-the-workplace/

Tugade, M. M., & Fredrickson, B. L. (2004). Resilient individuals use positive emotions to bounce back from negative emotional experiences. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 86*(2), 320–333. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.86.2.320

Wibowo, A., & Paramita, W. (2022). Resilience and turnover intention: The role of mindful leadership, empathetic leadership, and self-regulation. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 29*(3), 325–341. https://doi.org/10.1177/154805 18211068735