

Employee Resilience: A Faceted Analytical Approach

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We share Britt, Shen, Sinclair, Grossman, and Klieger's (2016) concern over the confusion of the conceptual definition of resilience and believe that this thorny issue should be solved. Hence, our objective in this commentary is to dispel to some extent the fuzzy state of the resilience construct content, building on the extant resilience literature. This will help to enhance resilience construct validity.

There is indeed a host of proposed conceptualizations of resilience (for a review see Meredith et al., 2011), developed in a series of waves of research (Richardson, 2002). Some of them, although very encompassing, are weak theoretically because they are based on statistically analyzing resilience data using factor analysis (e.g., Iacoviello & Charney, 2014). This statistical method has been sharply criticized on several grounds (e.g., Rabenu, Elizur, & Yaniv, 2015). The basic assumptions of its statistical model, for instance linearity, are often violated (Kelderman, Mellenbergh, & Elshout, 1981). Apart from this, factors with only one or two salient loadings are frequently found when using factor analysis to reveal the structure of various concepts (e.g., Cunningham, 1981).

In the current commentary, we purport to introduce a definitional-formal framework of resilience, capitalizing on the facet analytical approach (Tziner, 1987). This approach posits that the components of a problem or an issue under investigation can be defined formally (Guttman, 1959). A facet is a criterion or a rule for classifying items associated with a given concept (Elizur, 1984; Roazzi, Campello de Souza, & Bilsky, 2015). A natural way to define the structural configuration of a multicomponent concept is to spell out the facets considered to exhaust its content (Elizur, 1984; Tziner, 1987). According to this approach, the content of a concept is broken down into components—termed *facets*—that represent the most important properties of the concept domain (content). Facets are therefore a classification of elements of a concept's content, according to some rules (i.e., exclusive features). For instance, in Tziner and Rimmer (1984), in an investigation of the

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underlying structure of ability tests, one of the facets was defined as “mental operation” (required by any ability test) and consisted of four elements: (a1) rule inference, (a2) abstract cognitive rule application, (a3) clerical rule application, and (a4) concrete rule application. Using the facet theoretical approach, we will try to circumscribe systematically the content of the resilience construct.

Reviewing the literature, we pinpointed four basic facets to define the resilience domain: (a) Modalities of Coping, (b) Time Span of Resilient Behavior, (c) Level of Growth, and (d) Domain of Resilient Outcome.

Facet A: Modalities of Coping

Masten (2001) identified positive self-perceptions and a positive outlook on life as cognitive contributors to higher resilience. Iacoviello and Charney (2014) found that some of the factors obtained from factor analysis of resilience entail cognitive patterns of thinking and core beliefs that, when confronted with stressful situations, lead an individual to believe he/she can endure. Both of the researchers referred also to faith/spiritual belief as a constituent element. Consequently, we defined the first element: (a1) cognitive.

In addition, high-resilience individuals have emotional stability (Bonanno, Papa, & O’Neill, 2001; Masten, 2001). They also experience more positive emotions and less negative ones (Smith, Tooley, Christopher, & Kay, 2010). Accordingly, we defined the second element: (a2) emotional.

High-resilience individuals positively adjust and adapt to adversity (e.g., King & Rothstein, 2010; Kuntz, Näswall, Malinen, & Hodliffe, 2014; Luthans, Youssef-Morgan, & Avolio, 2015; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Masten & Wright, 2010). Individuals with high resilience may promote adaptive coping strategies (Alim et al., 2008) and seek more social support (Britt et al.; Iacoviello & Charney, 2014). They engage with spiritual role models and engage in activities that yield meaningful lives (Iacoviello & Charney, 2014). Thus, we defined the third element: (a3) instrumental (behavioral).

Facet B: Time Span of the Resilient Behavior

According to Bonanno (2004), resilience reflects the ability to maintain a stable equilibrium of normal functioning immediately after difficult events. Therefore, we defined the first element: (b1) immediately. However, it is different from recovery that usually requires a period of at least several months and then gradually returns to pre-event levels (Bonanno, 2004). Thus, we defined the second element: (b2) after a while (a recovery process was needed).

Facet C: Level of Growth

Resilience refers to the ability to return to one’s previous level of functioning (Carver, 1998) or maintain a stable equilibrium of normal functioning after

difficult events (Bonanno, 2004). Accordingly, we added a first element: (c1) baseline level. However, many researchers refer to subsequent growth (e.g., Caza & Milton, 2012; Luthans et al., 2015). They emphasize how resilient individuals thrive, rather than just survive, in a changing environment (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Caza & Milton, 2012; Kuntz, et al., 2014; Luthans et al., 2015). Thus, we defined the second element: (c2) higher level of growth.

Facet D: Domain of Resilient Outcome

Resilience is frequently defined as obtaining good results following exposure to adversity (e.g., Carver, 1998; Cicchetti & Tucker, 1994; Greene & Conrad, 2002; King & Rothstein, 2010; Masten, 2001). According to Hobfoll (2011), resilience refers to people's ability to withstand the most negative consequences of stressful challenge and remain vigorous, committed, and engaged in important life tasks. For most people, work is one of the major tasks in their lives. This facet includes the demonstration of resilience as elaborated by Britt and colleagues.

There is a positive relationship between resilience (as part of the psychological capital construct) and workplace performance outcomes (see a meta-analysis by Avey, Reichard, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2011). Campbell (1999) defined performance as a set of behaviors, the implementation of which is relevant to achieving the goals of a company or organization. We pay attention to direct performance, which includes the level of assignment completion and the quality of the work intended to complete tasks (determined by job expertise), but also to the contextual knowledge that is determined by personality, achievement motivation, and the worker's credibility (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). Accordingly, we defined the first element—(d1) direct performance—and the second element—(d2) contextual (indirect) performance.

A positive relationship exists between resilience (as part of the psychological capital construct) and psychological well-being (Avey et al., 2011). Moreover, individual resources when coping with stressful life events determine one's physical and mental well-being (Epstein-Mathias, 2003). Resilience is a resource (an ability or potential) that allows individuals to withstand major stress or recover from it (Hobfoll, 2011; Pooley & Cohen, 2010; Schetter & Dolbier, 2011). Hence, we added a third element—(d3) well-being—and a fourth element—(d4) physical health.

The Structural Configuration of Resilience

The facet analytical approach attempts not only to formally define the facets comprising a concept's domain but also the relationships between these facets (Elizur, 1984; Tziner & Levy, 2010). The totality of these relationships can be formally expressed in a phrase called a "mapping sentence." The map-

ping sentence serves as a guide to create structural configurations, to plan and collect observations, and to analyze data intended to empirically corroborate or disconfirm the hypothesized relationships between the facets and their components (Levy, 2005). We propose the following mapping sentence as a possible definition of the concept of resilience as presented in Figure 1.

The assessment that in order to adapt to significant adversity (Y), the subject (x) will respond

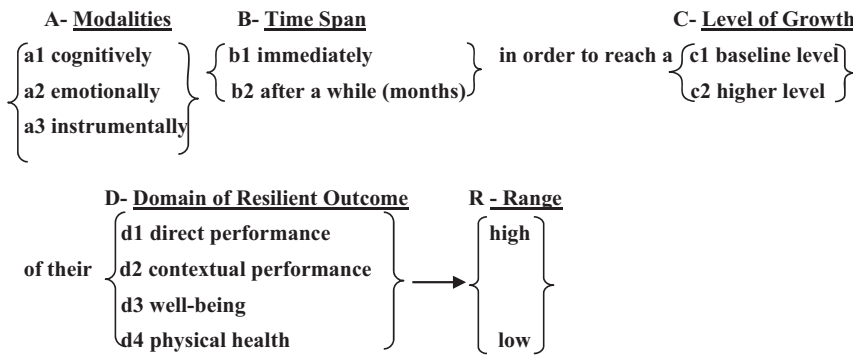


Figure 1. Mapping sentence definition of resilience.

We assume that this framework provides a different and novel perspective that could contribute to dispelling the dispute over the conceptual structure and content of resilience. Of course, in future studies there would be a need to examine empirically the facet analytical structure emanating from the above mapping sentence using Similarity Structure Analysis (SSA), a nonmetric multidimensional scaling statistic aimed at examining the extent to which the hypothesized structure corresponds to the empirically unfolding structure.

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