

Resilience to Stress by Executive Leaders: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

*Executive Leaders,
Resilience, Stress,
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High-caliber leaders can work under pressure, respond to changing circumstances, and bounce back from failures. This study compared executive leaders' stress-coping abilities and compared them to their coworkers' perceptions of each leader. Multiple case study design was used. The study included seven Vice-Chancellors and five coworkers from each Selected Public Sector university as participants. Self-assessed Inventory of de Varies (2005) and Observation sheet were used as data collection tools. Friedman's test and paired sampling t-test were used to compare self-assessed and observed perspectives. There was no significant difference in self-assessed views of university executive leaders about stress resilience but they agreed on getting stressed due to heavy workload and health problems of one or more close family members. At the same time, there were disparities among self-assessed opinions of leaders and observed views of their respective co-workers except in two cases, there were similarities among the views of the Vice-chancellor and their co-workers.

INTRODUCTION

Resilience originated from the Latin word which means the elastic quality of a substance. (Greene, 2002). According to Cognitive Resource Theory (1995), stress impairs leaders' rationality and ability to think clearly and logically. The leader's experience and intellect, on the other hand, may help to reduce the impact of stress on his or her actions: intelligence is the most essential factor in low-stress situations, while experience is more important in high-stress situations.

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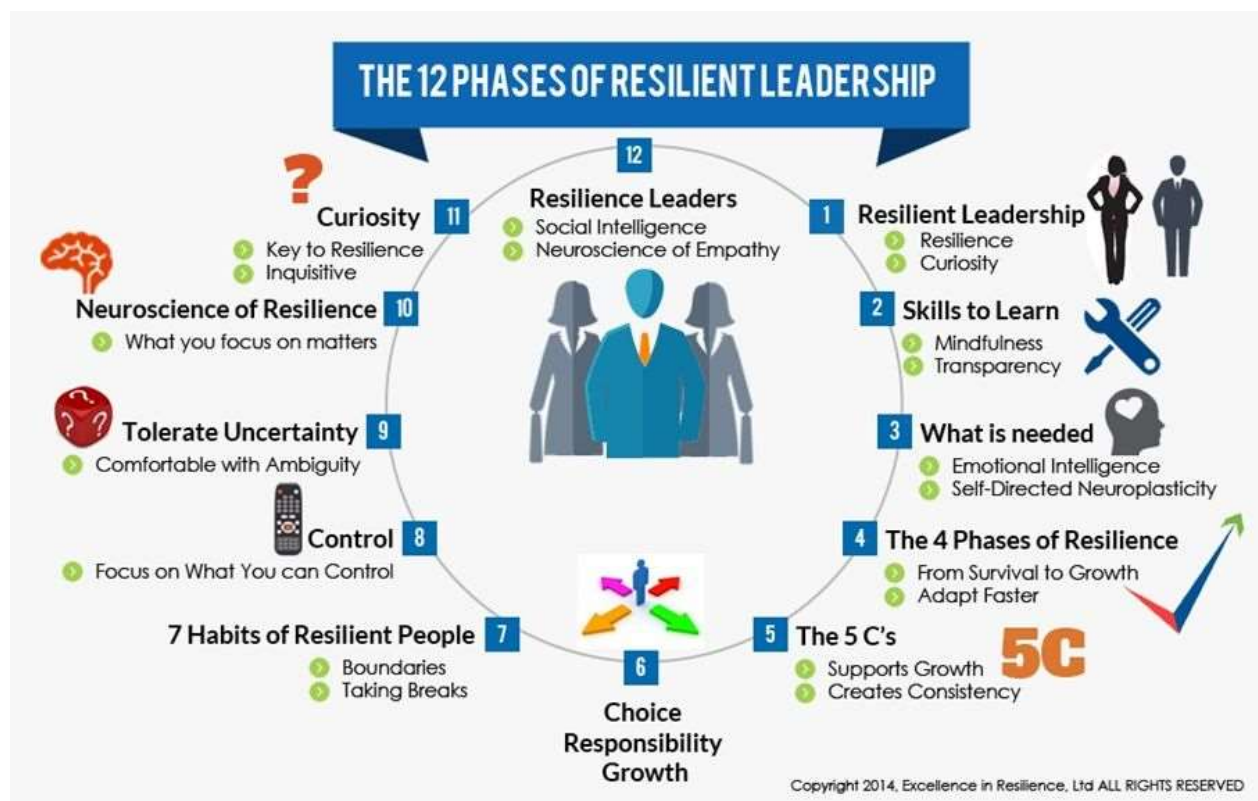
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Financial losses, outmodedness, downsizing, rapid technical changes, workplace violence, and acts of terrorism are all common shocks that an organization faces nowadays. (Gardner & Schermerhorn, 2004)



Source: Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) on resilience and brain science.

Individuals with a sufficient number of high-quality resources, such as personal, social, emotional, and material capital, are more likely to develop resilience. It's also more likely to happen when people have great experiences that allow them to achieve and create self-efficacy, which motivates them to succeed again (Masten & Reed, 2002).



Source: Resilience Coaching and training, UK

Greene (2014) presented the resilience ecological-stress model which is an integrated approach for social work research, education, and practice.

Dannels & Masters (2020) conducted a review study on stress inoculation training which reduces performance anxiety and state anxiety while improving performance under the stress of executives. In mixed-method research by Shelton (et al) (2019), a positive relationship between spirituality, leader resiliency, and life situation /well-being was explored. Bartone (2009) conducted a study regarding resilience under military operational stress. He concluded that a hardy leader influences and stresses resilience in an entire unit.

Resilience to stress is one of the competencies an executive leader may possess for a healthy organizational climate. Awareness of leaders about stress resilience and co-workers' knowledge is also very important for team activities and a better environment. Previous latest studies from 2022 to 2024 indicated that resilience is essential for individuals and for an organization and a leader has a significant role in building organizational resilience. Healthcare challenges, resilience factors, and a model for resilience were also presented. Health care and well-being is the third goal among the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations in 2015.

CURRENT STUDY

This study investigated the self-assessed views of executive leaders at universities regarding resilience to stress. After that, each leader's self-assessed view is compared with the mean of observed views of their colleagues. A part of the Global Executive Leadership Inventory and observation sheet was used to collect data. Significant differences among leaders' views regarding resilience to stress were found. Leaders' competency regarding resilience to stress was judged by the leaders themselves and then by their co-workers.

Objectives of the study

- To find the differences in the views of executive leaders regarding resilience to stress at the university level quantitatively.
- To compare the differences in views of executive leaders regarding resilience to stress and the views observed by their coworkers about them at their university.

Hypotheses of Study

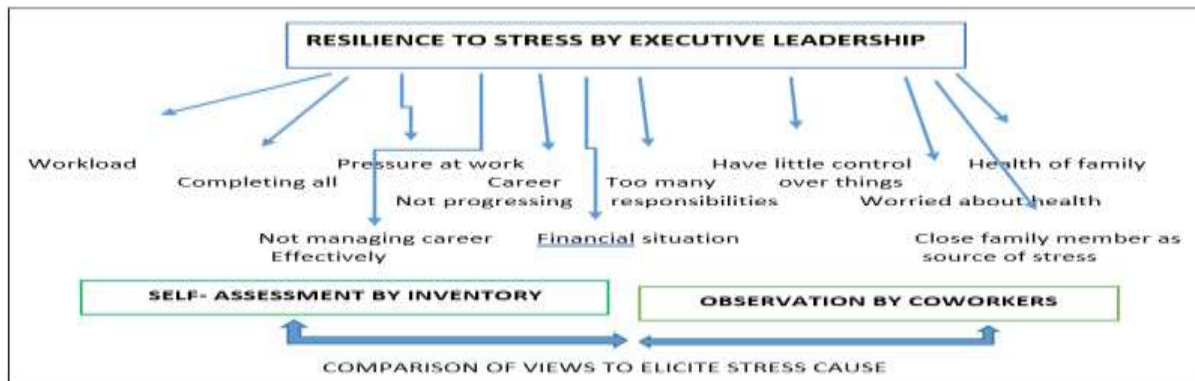
Ho1. There is no significant difference in the views of executive leaders regarding resilience to stress at the university level.

Ho2. There is no significant difference in the views of executive leaders and views observed by their co-workers regarding resilience to stress at the University level.

METHODOLOGY

Multiple case study design was followed. Self-assessed Inventory and Observation sheet were used for data collection.

Conceptual Framework



Participants

- Seven Vice-Chancellors, Universities of KP, Pakistan who gave consent to collect data.
- Five co-workers of their respective executive leaders were observing their competency regarding resilience to stress.

Procedure

Nineteen public universities were founded, with only 15 vice-chancellors operating regularly and interim vice-chancellors in the remaining universities. For in-depth study and timely completion of work, this study was limited to only seven VCs, and five colleagues of each VC at universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were selected as participants of the study.

The sampling technique was Purposeful. According to Creswell (2002), 3-5 participants are required for Multiple case studies while a minimum sample size of 6-9, partial theme representation needing 4-6 cases, and substantial theme completion necessitating 7-10 cases, are suggested by Ding (2021).

The total no. of Participants is $7+35=42$ for this study.

The Global Executive Leadership Inventory, established by de Vries (2005), was used for self-assessed perspectives of leadership for stress resilience. A five-point Likert-type scale observation form was also included, which was to be filled out by coworkers.

Data was gathered by having executive leaders fill out an inventory and having their coworkers fill out an observation sheet. The Friedman's test and paired sample t-test were used to compare means through SPSS.

Result and Discussion

Keep in view the objectives of the study and the data acquired by the researcher were examined using Friedman's test to see a significant difference between the self-assessed views of Executive leaders.

Table 1: Comparison among self-assessed views of Executive Leaders regarding Resilience to Stress

S. No.	Statements	VCG	VCE	VCK	VCB	VCI	VCW	VCP	Q	p-value
1.	My workload is too heavy.	5	3	2	3	4	4	4	1.57	.67
2.	I never seem to be able to complete all the work I have to do.	5	1	2	4	3	1	2	0.86	.93
3.	The pressure at work has become excessively stressful.	5	1	2	4	4	2	2	1.57	.67
4.	I feel that my career is not progressing the way I would like it to.	5	1	2	4	2	1	2	1.57	.66
5.	I have too many responsibilities.	5	1	2	4	4	2	4	1.57	.67
6.	I feel that I have little control over the things that happen to me.	5	1	2	4	4	1	2	.43	.93
7.	I am currently worried about my own health.	5	1	2	3	1	2	2	1.57	.67
8.	I worry about the health of one or more close family members.	5	1	4	4	4	4	2	3.86	.27
9.	I am worried about my financial situation.	5	1	1	5	3	2	2	.43	.93
10.	My relationship with one or more close family members is a source of stress.	3	1	1	4	1	2	2	1.57	.67
11.	I feel that I have not been managing my career in an effective manner.	3	1	1	4	3	1	2	1.57	.67
Total		51	13	21	43	33	22	26	.00	1

There was no significant difference among the self-assessed views of Executive Leaders regarding resilience to stress as the p-value is 1 which was greater than the significant value of 0.05. So the null hypothesis "There is no significant difference among the self-assessed views of vice-chancellors regarding resilience to stress at the university level" was accepted. Every leader under his circumstances had the same views regarding resilience to stress.

Table 2: Comparison of Self-assessed and observed views regarding Resilience to Stress of Executive Leaders

S. No.	Executive Leader	Category	Mean	t-value	p-value
1.	VCG	Self-assessed	4.5	8.166	0.00
		Observed	2.79		
2.	VCE	Self-assessed	1.167	16.94	0.00
		Observed	4.76		
3.	VCK	Self-assessed	1.833	4.05	0.002
		Observed	2.95		
4.	VCB	Self-assessed	3.917	1.603	0.137
		Observed	3.604		
5.	VCI	Self-assessed	3	3.07	0.011
		Observed	1.979		
6.	VCW	Self-assessed	1.917	2.273	0.042
		Observed	2.5		
7.	VCP	Self-assessed	2.5	0.714	0.49
		Observed	2.29		

Generally, there was a significant difference between the self-assessed and observed views of Executive leaders regarding resilience to stress at the university level except there was a similarity in the views of VCB and VCP with their coworkers regarding resilience to stress. Their p-value was 0.137 and 0.49 respectively which was greater than the significant level of 0.05.

So the null hypothesis was rejected as in most cases the p-value was less than 0.05 level of significance except in two cases.

Spangler (et al) (2012) concluded in their study that leader plays a vital role in positive, social, and emotional aspects of the workplace having resilience to stress, health, well-being, and better organizational outcomes.

Pincott (2014) conducted a qualitative study on female executive leadership resilience. This study examined emotional intelligence contributes to their resilience, professional, and personal support is also important.

A systematic review was conducted by Robertson (et al.) (2015) about Resilience training in the workplace from 2003 to 2014. Training has more focus on preventative measures for stress and anxiety and the broader area of high-level performance was neglected.

Dartey-Baah (2015) looked at the research on three types of leadership: resilient leadership, transformative leadership, and transactional leadership. It was determined that attributes such as strategic thinking, emotional intelligence, adaptability orientation, learning, performance, and collaborative leadership are shared by all three.

Brendel (et al.) (2016) investigated the impact of mindfulness meditation practice on effective leadership in a changing environment. There were no substantial changes in resilience or ambiguity tolerance.

Domeck (2016) investigated the perception of Resilience in Educational leadership in Central Florida. Resilience factor Inventory was used. Emotional intelligence was high in University leaders while Business leaders had a focus on problem-solving skills. Job satisfaction was not a predictor of resilience.

A meta-analytic review of the literature was studied by Harms (et al) (2017) on Leaders and stress and it was mentioned that the stress level of followers was determined by the behavior of the leader. Transformational leadership has a negative relationship with the stress of followers while abusive supervision has a positive relationship with subordinate stress and burnout. Leader-member exchange plays a significant role in stress and burnout.

There is a book published by Bartone (2017) on leader influence on resilience. He mentioned that adaptability is part of resilience. Hardiness commitment includes a sense of internal balance and self-confidence which helps in stressful and threatening situations. A leader should be a facilitator for positive and resilient thinking and behavior.

Grey and Jones (2018) conducted an exploratory study on “Resilience and well-being of Public Sector leaders”. The leader faces and is influenced by workforce & organizational challenges to sustain resilience. Leaders need to know about themselves i.e. self-awareness and serve as resilient and well-being leaders to all.

Robinson (2020) worked on the resilience and success of African American female leaders. Leaders have high leadership qualities but face social barriers, labeling, and biases. For success, better strategies should be adopted such as professionalism, training opportunities, having faith, and social networking.

Resilience to stress among executive leaders is a crucial competence that can significantly impact their well-being and work performance. (Ziegele, 2021)

Co-workers' perspectives on executive leaders' stress resilience competence are essential, as it can influence team dynamics and organizational success, underscoring the need for a comprehensive understanding of resilience in leadership roles. (Herberg, 2021). So, it is concluded from the discussion on the literature review that leader faces different organizational challenges which cause stresses of various types as per the situation. A leader may have the competence of stress resilience and co-workers have that ability too for team building to lead organization towards success. A resilient leader should have emotional

intelligence, training to improve working skills, social networking in the form of colleagues or mentors, and self-awareness is also very important in dealing the stressful situations.

In my study, leaders' opinions were asked about their workload, work pressure, too many responsibilities, health problems or family members' health, financial situation, and effective management of their careers. Mostly they agree that the heavy workload and health of their family members are causing stress to be resilient.

CONCLUSION

There was no significant difference among the self-assessed views of Vice-Chancellors regarding resilience to stress at the university level. They agreed on two points: they have too much workload and the health of their family members causes stress to have resilience for it. In other situations, such as completing the work, work pressure, feeling that career is not progressing, too many responsibilities, lack of control on things, financial worries, family relations, and career management.

There were significant differences in the views of vice-chancellors and observed views observed by their co-workers regarding resilience to stress. Leaders had the opinion that they were not stressed while co-workers indicated that leaders were highly stress and had less resilience. Only VCB and VCP views matched their co-workers' observed views regarding resilience to stress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the above conclusions, the recommendations were as follows:

As there is too much workload for effective workload management, a list of work priorities, scheduling the work, distributing the work among co-workers, or giving ownership play important roles in reducing stress and having better health to continue your work effectively.

There must be a work-life balance to take care of your family as well. For this purpose, planning, scheduling of work and one should be organized to manage time in a better way.

To handle work pressure or pressure groups, one must be vigilant, and arrange meetings, and discussions to elicit their views but in a limited way, assigning them responsibilities could be a possible solution to the problem. Social intelligence and social networking also play a vital roles to get guidance in ambiguity and control vague situation.

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