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A Study on Public Library Employee Resilience at Workplace with special reference to the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka

Lavanya Jegatheesparan
Eastern University, Sri Lanka, l.lavanya08@yahoo.com

G.D.M.N. Samaradiwakara
University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka, manojakumara@gmail.com

A study on public library employee resilience at workplace with special reference to the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka

J.Lavanya[1], G.D.M.N. Samaradiwakara[2]
[1]Eastern University, Sri Lanka
[2]University of Sri Jayewardenepura

Abstract

In today's world of work, employees are expected to show resilience behaviour as the workplace is constantly changing and unpredictable. Therefore, this study was designed to examine the resilience of public library employees at their workplace. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to all public library staff members in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. The study enlisted the participation of 340 staff members from 143 public libraries in the Eastern Province. Employee resilience was measured using Employee Resilience (EmpRes) scale developed by Näswall et al. in 2015. The EmpRes scale items were subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis (Principal Component Analysis) using a Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization to examine the construct's dimensional structure. The results revealed that Librarians showed resilience behaviours such as work collaboration, positive attitude, learn from mistakes, and proactive behaviour. They were considered as highly resilient personnel because all items in the Employee Resilience scale were significant and mean values for the descriptive statistics of significant factors were greater than 4. Similarly, Library Assistants and other staff categories' resilience was also examined. Findings revealed that Library Assistant and other staff categories had worked collaboratively and showed proactive nature. It is concluded that both categories represented areas of deliberate behaviour that were considered valuable in developing workplace resilience activities in the future.

Keywords: Resilience, Employees, Public library, Eastern Province, Sri Lanka

Introduction

Contemporary work has become more fluid and unpredictable. Increased environmental disasters pose additional issues that necessitate both adaptive and planned capacities (Lee et al., 2013). Questions arise how do public library professional and nonprofessional human resources manage adverse situations? What prevents the public library staff members from feeling personally affected when the outcomes are undesirable? This characteristic is frequently referred to as resilience. Resilience provides a positive attitude in today's workplace, which results in improved decision-making and a more logical and systematic response to difficulties. Employee resilience is proposed to be an adaptive and resource-using capacity that enables people to cope better with change and adversity in the workplace (Rossi et al., 2013). Moving away from such conceptualizations and toward a developable perspective of resilience may be more productive, as it enables firms to encourage resilience among their employees, resulting in a robust and adaptable workforce. Employees at work place, especially public libraries, are expected to develop increased resilience in the current COVID-19 pandemic. A resilient employee is supposed to be adaptive to changes and continually able to adjust themselves to new needs (Rubino et al., 2011). Employees in the public sector must be resilient in order to thrive in more dynamic situations that require quick reactions to rapid change. Employees who have a high level of resilience are less susceptible to being pushed down by hurdles.

If the public libraries have resilient workforce, it benefits the library in several ways. It also improves employees' overall health and wellbeing in the workplace and in turn improves employees and organizational performance. When it comes to public sector organization, emerging stronger during COVID-19 will result in a resilient workforce that bounces back from adverse conditions. Burton (2017) has recognized employee resilience as a prerequisite for

organizational adaptability in unpredictable and changing business situations. As a result, resilience was deemed critical for organizational integration, learning, knowledge sharing, organizational flexibility, and organizational success (Jozaei & Mitchell, 2018). Examining employee resilience will assist employers and libraries in preparing for current and future job needs. Therefore, it is critical to conduct an examination of employee resilience in the workplace and to identify factors that contribute to employee resilience growth.

Research problem

Workplaces are often stressful, ever-changing and the challenges they present test a person's tenacity. At this juncture, there are no more exceptions to public library employees too. They also need to be resilient to manage challenges such as resource constraints, rising demands, epidemic diseases, ethnic issues, natural disaster, and the tensions and contradictions that underlie much public sector work. The present study is needed to address the dearth of studies that have explored aspects of the employee resilience at the workplace in Sri Lankan public library system. Therefore, the current study is essential to fill the gap in the empirical studies regarding employee resilience at work. It also contributes to the innovative type of scholarly research in the public sector since most studies about resilience at work concerned the private sector. By measuring employee resilience at work place would help library management to make suggestions for the amendment in policies and also develop them to meet the current and future organizational goals.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to examine the employee resilience at the workplace in relation to the Public Libraries in the Eastern Province in Sri Lanka. It studies the resilience at the workplace of Librarians, Library Assistants and other staff categories.

Literature Review

The literature of the previous researches on the employee resilience at work place was reviewed. It discussed local and international literature in terms of resilience of human resource capital of public libraries. Further, these were useful to identify the connections, contradictions and gaps in the previous literature.

According to Naswall et al. (2015), employee resilience is defined as the capacity to flourish in a changing environment. The organizational framework, including leadership and organizational culture, facilitates this ability. This meant that corporations had a significant impact on their employees' ability to change and perform under stress. As a result, the study of resilience aimed to discover specific traits that would benefit an individual's potential, making them stronger and more productive. Besides, Gomide et al. (2015) examined the mediating effect of resilience at work on the connection between satisfaction with perceived organizational supports and job well-being. Additionally, the scientists observed a positive relationship between resilience and employee performance (Luthans et al., 2006), as well as job satisfaction, commitment, and work pleasure (Youssef & Luthans, 2007).

Costa et al. (2019) conducted a study to determine the impact of human resource management policies and practices on public servant resilience at work, based on the importance of workplace resilience and the necessity of effective human resource management strategies in companies.

The findings indicated that only an involvement policy was a significant predictor of workplace resilience. Additionally, the results indicated the validity and reliability of two scales (Human Resource Management Policies and Practices Scale and Resilience at Work Scale), which can be employed in related scientific studies. Steinhardt and Dolbier (2008) developed a resilience training strategy that significantly boosted college students' resilience. Therefore, resilience training strategy can be implemented among the library employees to improve their resilience behavior in the future as well.

However, existing research has paid scant attention to the role of human resource practices in employee resilience development (Branicki et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2016; Kossek & Perrigino, 2016), and only a few studies have examined high-performance work systems and psychological capital for individual and employee resilience specifically. It had been stated that resilience produced through human resource practices should reflect employees' capacity to gain skills, as well as their ability to endure and succeed in harsh and chaotic situations (Coutu 2002; Avey et al., 2008). According to Naswall et al. (2015), a friendly, collaborative, and learning-oriented work environment promotes employee resilience. There was a void in the literature about the extent to which public library employees demonstrated resilience behaviour. According to the literature, it was determined that studying employee resilience would be beneficial because it aids in adapting to challenges and changes in the workplace. Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate employee resilience using the EmpRes scale developed by Naswall et al. in 2015. The scale could potentially be utilized by researchers exploring the relationship between employee resilience and other theoretical and practical characteristics. As a result, it would be preferable to adapt the same scale for the current study in order to monitor employee resilience levels.

Further, this scale was only used by several researchers in international context (Näswall et al., 2015; Näswall et al., 2019; Näswall et al., 2013; Hodliffe, 2014; Tonkin, 2016; Franken et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2019). There were no studies using employee resilience scale among public library employees in Sri Lankan scenario. Based on that, the current research was interested to use the same scale to examine the resilience of employees at their workplace in Sri Lankan context.

Research Design & Methods

Present study is quantitative in nature. The survey research strategy was adopted for the study as this strategy is generally used when the population is large and it allows the researcher to gather huge portion of data to answer the research questions (Saunders et al., 2009). It was a cross-sectional study as the data was collected once, over a short period of time. The study population consisted of all the staff members (Professional and Non- professional) who work in public libraries in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. The data collecting tool used for the study is a self-administrated questionnaire. Questionnaires were distributed among all the professional and non-professional staff members of the public libraries in the Eastern Province, Sri Lanka. Of the 424 employees invited, 340 responded, which yielded a response rate of 80.19%. Cronbach's alpha value of the data collection tool was 0.767 confirmed that the tool is reliable for data collection.

Employee resilience was measured using Employee resilience scale developed by Näswall et al. in 2015 which consists of 9 items. Exploratory factor analysis was performed to identify the latent constructs of employee resilience. The participants were asked to rate how often they

engaged in the resilient behaviors in the items, using five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (Almost Never) to 5 (Always).

Findings and discussion

Demographic profile of the respondents

As indicated in Table 1, there were 181 staff members from the Batticaloa district with 117 and 42 members respectively from Ampara and Trincomalee districts. Moreover, responses were received from 44 libraries in Ampara district as well as 28 libraries in Trincomalee district.

Table 1. Total numbers of libraries and staff involved in the study

District	Total libraries contacted in the study	Librarians	Library Assistants	Other staff category
Ampara	44	17	65	35
Batticaloa	71	18	135	28
Trincomalee	28	8	24	10
Total	143	43	224	73

Resilience of Librarians

Employees' resilience was measured by the nine-item Employee Resilience (EmpRes) scale developed by Näswall et al. in 2015. An example item is 'I effectively collaborate with others to handle unexpected challenges at work'. The participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the series of statements under 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Almost Never) to 5 (Always) to measure employee resilience.

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's Test for Resilience of Librarians

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.761
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	224.945
	Df	36
	Sig.	.000

The EmpRes Scale items were subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis (Principal Component Analysis) using a Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization to examine the construct's dimensional structure. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.761, indicating that factor analysis was suitable. The KMO measures the sampling adequacy which should be closed to 0.5 for a satisfactory factor analysis to continue. Kaiser (1974) recommend 0.5 (value for KMO) as a minimum (barely accepted), values between 0.7-0.8 acceptable, and values above 0.9 are marvelous. The Bartlett's test of sphericity χ^2 (36) = 224.945, p=0.000 showed that there was a patterned relationship between the items as indicated by Table 2. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant (P<0.01) which means that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix.

The items loaded onto three factors according to Table 3 based on Kaiser's criterion (1960) for retaining factors with Eigen-values >1. The loadings of the nine variables on the three factors extracted. The higher the absolute value of the loading, the more the factor contributes to the variable. All loadings less than 0.5 had been suppressed. Further, no variables had been removed from the final data, and cross-loading of the variable were not identified.

Table 3. Rotated Component Matrix for Resilience of Librarians

	Rotated Component Matrix[a]		
	Components		
Items	1	2	3
I effectively collaborate with others to handle challenges at work	.869		
I use change at work as an opportunity for growth	.855		
I learn from mistakes at work and improve the way I do my job	.782		
I effectively respond to feedback at work, even criticism	.781		
I successfully manage a high workload for long periods of time	.730		
I resolve crises competently at work	.719		
I approach superior staff when I need their support		.881	
I seek assistance at work when I need specific resources		.881	
I re-evaluate my performance and continually improve the way I do my work			.961

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.[a]

a. Rotation converged in 4 iterations.

As an overall picture, there were 3 latent variables to measure employee resilience. This 3-factor model explained 77.50% of variance of the data. The first factor had grouped 6 items. These six items converged together in category-1, and this explained with 43.59% of the total variance.

These category grouped employee resilience behaviors which include resolving the crisis, managing high workload, effective collaboration, responding to feedback effectively, change at work as an opportunity to growth, and learning from mistakes for improvement at work. The second factor had two variables: Approach superior staff when need their support and seeking assistance at work when need specific resources, which explained 21.00% of the total variance in the data. Finally, the third factor consisted of one item which was "I re-evaluate my performance and continually improve the way I do my work". This explained 12.91% of the total variance. It was worth mentioning that all 9 items in the scales were significant in this study. It was noted that "I re-evaluate my performance and continually improve the way I do my work" had higher loadings which meant Librarians had the ability to evaluate their performance and willing to improve further. Getting assistance from senior staff and colleague also considered as a resilient behavior which had higher loading (0.881) as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Factor analysis for resilience of Librarians

Categories	Items	Factor loading
Category-1	I effectively collaborate with others to handle challenges at work	.869
	I use change at work as an opportunity for growth	.855
	I learn from mistakes at work and improve the way I do my job	.782
	I effectively respond to feedback at work, even criticism	.781
	I successfully manage a high	.730

	workload for long periods of time	
	I resolve crises competently at work	.719
Category-2	I approach superior staff when I need their support	.881
	I seek assistance at work when I need specific resources	.881
Category-3	I re-evaluate my performance and continually improve the way I do my work	.961

Finally, factor scores were added to the data as depicted by Table 5. The means values were calculated and they had the same 1 – 5 scales as input variables. It was concluded that Category 1, Category 2 and Category 3 were rated as best to interpret employee resilience. It confirmed that Librarians showed resilience behaviours such as work collaboration positive attitude, learn from mistakes, and proactive behaviour. Moreover, they depended on higher officials when they need support. It was worth mentioning that public librarians had curiosity about improving their performance.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for significant factors of Resilience of Librarians

Descriptive Statistics			
Categories	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Category 1	340	4.2721	.68108
Category 2	340	4.1250	.78225
Category 3	340	4.4765	.84283

It is emphasized that the public librarians in the Eastern Province were considered as highly resilient personal because all items in the Employee Resilience scale were significant and mean values for the descriptive statistics of significant factors were greater than 4. Public sector employees need to be resilient to cope with increasingly dynamic environments that demand flexible responses to constant challenge and shock (Lewis et al., 2014). Similar study had been conducted by Tonkin in 2016 and the researcher examined the impact of human resource practices on employee resilience. The findings indicated that four critical areas of HR practices namely job design, information sharing and flow within an organization, employee benefits, and employee development opportunities which enable employee resilience. Consequently, the effective implementation of HR practices in these areas has been the key factor in developing employee resilience.

Resilience of Library Assistants and other staff categories

Resilience of Library Assistant and other staff categories was measured. The same Employee Resilience (EmpRes) scale developed by Näswall et al. (2015) was used to study the employee resilience in the present study.

Table 6. KMO and Bartlett's Test of resilience of Library Assistants and other staff category

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.823
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	859.617
	Df	36
	Sig.	.000

An Exploratory Factor Analysis was performed on the 9 items using a Principal Component analysis with a Varimax rotation, providing the KMO statistics as per Table 6. Further, all factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were retained. The factor coefficients were sorted by size and all factor coefficients less than 0.5 were suppressed. The KMO statistic for this solution was 0.823 indicated that the sample is adequate for performing factor analysis. The Bartlett's test of sphericity χ^2 (36) = 859.617, p=0.000 showed that there was a patterned relationship between the items. Exploratory factor analysis leads to a solution comprising of 2 factors, each having loadings of 0.5 accounted for 56.605% of the total variance of the distribution of data.

Table 7. Rotated Component Matrix of resilience of Library Assistants and other staff categories

Rotated Component Matrix[a]		
	Component	
	1	2
I resolve crises competently at work	.821	
I successfully manage a high workload for long periods of time	.794	
I effectively collaborate with others to handle challenges at work	.684	
I learn from mistakes at work and improve the way I do my job	.534	
I re-evaluate my performance and continually improve the way I do my work		
I seek assistance at work when I need specific resources		.769
I use change at work as an opportunity for growth		.728

I approach superior staff when I need their support		.699
I effectively respond to feedback at work, even criticism	.538	.583

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.[a]

 a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

The item "I effectively respond to feedback at work, even criticism" cross loaded among two components as depicted in Table 7. The item "I resolve crises competently at work" has highest factor loading (0.821) followed by "I successfully manage a high workload for long periods of time" (0,794) and I seek assistance at work when I need specific resources (0.769).

The item "I re-evaluate my performance and continually improve the way I do my work" was removed from analysis since it is not a significant factor. It confirmed that non-professional staff did not evaluate their performances and they were not interested to improve their selves further. This resilience behavior is a crucial one and should be developed by them in the future.

According to Table 8, Category 1 denoted the significant items namely resolve crises competently, effective collaboration to handle challenges, learn from mistakes and successfully manage high workload which explains 29.157% of the total variance. Similarly, Category 2 comprised of 4 significant items: Approach superior staff, seek assistance, effectively respond to feedback and use change at work as an opportunity for growth and which accounted for 27.448% of the total variance. It is surprisingly noted that both categories were more or less equally contributed to the total variance.

Table 8. Factor analysis for resilience of Library assistants and other staff categories

Categories	Items	Factor loading
Category 1	I resolve crises competently at work	.821
	I successfully manage a high workload for long periods of time	.794
	I effectively collaborate with others to handle challenges at work	.684
	I learn from mistakes at work and improve the way I do my job	.534
Category 2	I seek assistance at work when I need specific resources	.769
	I use change at work as an opportunity for growth	.728
	I approach superior staff when I need their support	.699
	I effectively respond to feedback at work, even criticism	.583

According to Table 9, factor scores were considered for further interpretation. Categories 1 and 2 have mean values greater than 4.0. It is emphasized that these two categories can be rated as best for explaining the resilience of non-professional employees of public libraries in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. It seemed that Library Assistants and other staff categories had good collaboration, proactive behavior and were ready to get assistance from superiors. Besides, they had a positive attitude when receiving feedback. It is concluded that both categories represented

areas of deliberate behavior that were considered valuable in developing workplace resilience activities in the future. In essence, organizational resources and practices can be viewed as enabling conditions for the development of a resilient workforce (Shin et al., 2012), which in turn determines organizational capacity to overcome challenges and, ideally, to create a competitive edge.

Table 9. Descriptive statistics for significant factors of resilience of Library Assistants and other staff category

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Category 1	297	4.3544	.67787
Category 2	297	4.1254	.71161

Conclusions

The Exploratory Factor Analysis was employed by using principal component method with Varimax rotation to find out the underlying factors of Public Librarians' resilience. This produced a three-factor model that explained 77.5 percent of the total variance. Category-1 contained five factors and explained 43.59 percent of the total variance. Category-2 included two variables that explained 21% of the total variance. Despite the fact that Category 3 only included one variable, it accounted for 12.91 percent of the overall variation. The findings revealed that the Librarians showed resilience behaviours such as collaboration with other employees to address the issues. They positively responded to criticism, learn from mistakes, and expose proactive behaviour. Furthermore, they relied upon their superior staff when they need support.

Public Librarians had very much concern on improving their competencies as per the findings of the study.

Similarly Library Assistants and other staff categories' resilience also examined. This resulted 2 factor model which exerted 56.605% of the total variance of data. Category-1 consisted of 4 variables which explained 29.157% of the total variance. Category-2 comprised of 4 variables which exerted 27.448% of the total variance. Likewise, Library Assistants and other staff categories had the ability to work collaboratively and showed proactive nature. Moreover, Library Assistants including other staff category had the nature of getting assistance from superior and co staff, which is really needed to enhance skill and knowledge in order to deliver intended services to the library customers. It was worth mentioning that public librarians have curiosity about improving their performance. However, findings confirmed that nonprofessional staff did not evaluate their performances and they were not willing to improve their selves further.

Implications

According to findings from resilience at the workplace, it is recommended that even though the study have shown better results, longitudinal studies are needed to confirm the results gained from the Employee Resilience scale.

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