

Title: The Psychometric Properties of the Resilience at Work Scale: A Validation Study in Jordan's Middle Eastern Context

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Abstract

This research is aimed at examining resilience in the workplace with the aim of validating the Resilience at Work (RAW) scale for Jordan's Middle Eastern society. Resilience studies in work contexts have moved beyond the personality characteristics towards the developmental process of individuals. Investigating resilience at work is valuable considering all the continuous changes and uncertainties taking place in the world of work. Previous research that tested the factorial structure of the Resilience at Work scale as well as its relationships with work engagement was conducted in Western cultures. Thus, the literature is lacking with regard to validating the reliability and the factorial structure of this instrument and its associations with work engagement in Jordan's collectivist society. This study will contribute to the knowledge by, first, examining the scale's reliability and factorial structure in a Jordanian, rather than a Western context, and second by investigating its relationships with work engagement in that country. This research findings will help practitioners to enhance the resilience levels of employees in organisations in Jordan.

Keywords: resilience, resilience at work scale, work engagement, culture and Jordan

Introduction

The continuously growing global competition, the restructuring of institutions, and the technological developments, are factors driving organisational transformations (Rutter, 2016). The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) led to a global economic recession (Alshareef et al., 2021), which is impacting negatively on low and middle-income countries (Congressional Research Service, 2021). These ongoing changes are steering practitioners to adopt new strategies to support workers to cope with the new challenges arising in the workplace (King, Newman and Luthans, 2016; Rutter, 2016). Contemporary organisations need to foster and support the psychological functioning of their workers to enable them to deal successfully with the increasingly complex and often adverse, work environments (Livingston, 2015).

In fact, the workplace is being characterised by workers being overloaded, having to meet excessive targets, and fewer employees being recruited (Winwood, Colon and McEwen, 2013). Consequently, this could result in workers experiencing work-related stress (Winwood et al., 2013). In Western countries, it was reported that 83% of US workers endure work-related stress (The American Institute of Stress, 2019). In the UK, it was found that 822,000 employees experienced stress, anxiety, or depression (Health and Safety at Work, 2021). In Europe, one in five respondents suffered from stress on a daily basis (ADP, 2018). In a similar vein, in Middle Eastern countries, the levels of wellbeing of workers are declining (Gaines. (2021). Notably, work related stress can increase absenteeism rates and staff resignations, thus negatively impacting on the productivity and profits of the organisation (Gillespie, Chaboyer and Wallis, 2007).

Nowadays, employers are increasingly placing more value on the importance of human capital and are viewing their workers as important assets to organisations (Winwood et al., 2013). Practitioners are also adopting new strategies to support workers in bouncing back from the stressful events that occur in the workplace (Rutter, 2016). In general, it is essential for contemporary organisations to foster and support the psychological functioning of the workers to enable them to deal successfully with the increasingly complex work environment (Livingston, 2015), thereby enhancing their wellbeing (King et al., 2016) and performance (McCann, Selsky and Lee, 2009).

Some individuals tend to be able to cope with stressful work obligations more effectively than others. These individuals are inclined to be more resilient. Resilience refers to the “dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity” (Luthar,

Cicchetti and Becker, 2000, p543). It comprises of two main facets. The first is the experience of adversity (Masten, 2001). For example, setbacks in the workplace may emerge in the form of secluded and very intense events (e.g. crisis), or they may emerge in the form of less intense events that either occur repeatedly or last for longer periods of time (Fisher et al., 2018). In both forms, these setbacks produce adverse consequences that may negatively impact on the individual's performance and wellbeing (Richardson, 2002). The second facet of resilience is positive adaptation (Masten, 2001), where the individual restores their original levels of performance and wellbeing or even bounces back much further (Britt et al., 2016).

The concept of resilience has been viewed from different perspectives (Herrman et al., 2011). Some scholars perceived it as a genetic predisposition (Windle, 2011), innate (Rutter, 2012), a personality trait or state (Block and Block; 2006), that remains stable over (Wanberg and Banas, 2000). This notion infers that resilient individuals tend to be able to face challenges better than non-resilient ones (Shin, Taylor and Seo, 2012). Scholars have “conceptualised resilience as the individual's relative susceptibility to the maladaptive effects of their environment” (Malik and Garg, 2018, p78).

This approach has been very pivotal and to some degree is still followed by researchers (Block and Block, 2006), however, it disregards the complexities and fundamentals of psychological premises in that individuals cannot be separated from external factors (Lock, Rees and Heritage, 2020). Further, this view dismisses the elements that lead to developing resilience and how this concept can be measured within the work environment (Malik and Garg, 2018). Hence, this perspective lacks exploring the procedures and mechanisms that are central to examining the resilience concept more comprehensively. Moreover, this view does not enable scholars and practitioners to measure the essential factors of resilience that will enable individual's to successfully manage their day-to-day difficulties at work (Davis, Luecken and Lemery-Chalfant, 2009). Notably, examining the role of personality traits and their genetic predispositions is essential (Taylor, Way and Seeman, 2011), however, focusing on the personality characteristics that could be difficult to change may not be beneficial for helping employees to manage their reactions to stressful events at work (Winwood et al., 2013).

A contemporary perspective that shifted away from the dispositional view of resilience has emerged (Malik and Garg, 2018). This view conceptualises it as an interactive and developmental process and focuses on the interactions of individuals with the external environment (Rutter, 2012). Thus, rather than focusing on the static view of resilience, this

notion proposes that resilience is a malleable phenomenon that is teachable and developable (Winwood et al., 2013). In line with this, Buzzanell (2010) asserted that resilience is not a phenomenon that individuals either exhibit or not, but rather it can evolve and be maintained by adjusting to the different interactions and situations over time. Essentially, the majority of scholars have conceptualised resilience as experiencing a hardship that is followed by positively adapting to the setback (Winwood et al., 2013) and bouncing back from adversity (Buzzanell, 2010; Moenkemeyer et al., 2012; Torres and Fyke, 2013). Drawing on these views, this study will adopt the dynamic perspective, which supports the teachable and developable position of resilience.

Several instruments have been developed to measure resilience, however, the majority of these focus on examining the personality traits that play a role in bouncing back from adversity. Instead of exploring whether individuals are capable of rebounding from the challenges experienced, as well as thriving, becoming more skilful and increasingly competent, the existing resilience scales capture the construct by focusing on the protective elements that include individual characteristics and coping mechanisms (Malik and Garg, 2018). Most former questionnaires assessed the concept as a stable personality trait that assists individuals in dealing with stress. Hence, all previous instruments, except for the RAW scale, did not develop a survey that is directly targeted towards understanding workplace behaviours (Winwood et al., 2013). Essentially, the RAW scale for Winwood et al. (2013) is the only alternative survey of personal resilience at work that includes factors that individuals can choose and decide to learn, develop, and practice. It comprises 20 items and purports to measure seven subscales, as presented in table 1 below. Notably, Winwood et al. (2013) study included participants from Australia, USA, UK, Canada.

Table 1. Subscales and interpretation of the RAW scale (Winwood et al., 2013, p1207)

Subscale	Interpretation
Living authentically	This factor represents knowing and holding onto personal values, deploying personal strengths, and having a good level of emotional awareness and regulation
Finding one's calling	This factor is essentially associated with seeking work that has purpose, a sense of belonging and a fit with core values and beliefs
Maintaining perspective	This factor concerns having the capacity to reframe setbacks, maintain a solution focus, and manage negativity
Managing stress	This factor speaks of using work and life routines that help manage everyday stressors, maintain work life balance, and ensure time for relaxation
Interacting cooperatively	This factor refers to a workplace work style that includes seeking feedback, advice, and support as well as providing support to others
Staying healthy	This factor identifies a pattern of maintaining a good level of physical fitness and a healthy diet
Building networks	This factor concerns a pattern of developing and maintaining personal support networks

Former studies found strong relationships between resilience and behaviours that enable employees to bounce back from stressful work experiences, particularly, work engagement (Cooke et al., 2016; Malik and Garg, 2018). Given these findings, for this research, the association of resilience with engagement at work as a consequent variable in Jordan will be investigated. Specifically, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) of Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006) will be utilised. The scale has been widely studied in different countries,

such as Finland, the Netherlands, and South Africa (Bakker et al., 2008; De Bruin and Henn, 2013). It has been also found to be reliable and is composed of nine items with three subscales, which are: vigour, dedication, and absorption, as presented in table 2.

Table 2. Subscales and interpretation of the UWES scale (Schaufeli et al., 2006)

Subscale	Interpretation
Vigour	This factor is characterised by being energetic, mentally resilient and persistent during adverse times
Dedication	This factor is characterised by feeling inspired, enthusiastic and being extensively engaged with work
Absorption	This factor is characterised by being focused, content, attached, and strongly engrossed with work

Research Context: Jordan

Jordan is a developing country (Haddad, Owies and Mansour, 2009) located in the Middle East region. It is known for its collectivist society (Hofstede, 2022), where “people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (Hofstede, 2001, p225). In fact, culture shapes resilience processes (Theron, Liebenberg and Ungar, 2015). Accordingly, the cultural resilience research is considering cultural variability as a resource that may influence the resilience levels of the various ethnic groups (Handoyo et al., 2014). Therefore, examining resilience beyond Western societies necessitates considering factors that are relevant to the social contexts of these groups as well as their ethnicity (Moore et al., 2015). Ethnicity includes the individuals’ sense of attachment to their groups, which consequently forms behaviours and values (Ungar, 2010). Other than that, Handoyo et al. (2014) asserted that issues could arise, when using a standardised resilience instrument that has been examined on one population, in a different country. Evidently, resilience is possessed through the interplay of individuals with their environment (McAllister and McKinnon, 2008). Accordingly, it is worth validating the RAW scale in Jordan as the context and the local culture could impact upon it (Hjemdal et al., 2015).

Prominently, research in psychology in the entire Middle Eastern region is scarce (O’Gorman et al., 2012). In fact, since the year 2000, around 3,100 papers in the areas of employment testing, occupational, industrial, and organisational psychology were only published (Bayazit et al., 2018). Overall, the business psychology field in Jordan is relatively new (Mereish, 2020), particularly, in relation to studying resilience at work.

Research aims

This research has three main aims. The first is to examine the reliability of the RAW scale in Jordan. The second is to validate the factorial structure of the RAW scale in Jordan, whilst the third is to study the relationships between resilience and work engagement in that country.

Research questions

1. Does the factorial structure of the RAW scale in Jordan present a similar or different structure to what has been established in Western countries?
2. Is the RAW scale a reliable instrument to use in Jordan?
3. Are there positive relationships between the RAW scale and work engagement?

Research approach and methods

For the research, the hypothetico-deductive methodology will be adopted, which focuses on studying hypotheses in relation to their predictive success. Quantitative methods will be used and data will be collected using online surveys.

Design

For the research, a cross-sectional survey design will be utilised. Further, data will be collected using a convenience sampling method, particularly, the snowball sampling technique (Baltar and Brunet, 2012).

Target population

Data will be collected from the general population in Jordan. The sample will comprise working employees, both females and males, of different occupations, age groups, industries, qualifications, and years of experience.

Research significance

The novelty of this study revolves around the fact that the factorial structure of RAW has never been investigated in any Middle Eastern context, and more specifically, in Jordan’s collectivist

society. Thus, this study will build on previous Western research that examined the reliability and factorial structure of the RAW scale as well as the associations between resilience and work engagement. After establishing the reliability and the structure of the scale, practitioners in Jordan working in organisational settings will be able to introduce the instrument to the learning and development, coaching, organisational development, talent management, and recruitment and selection fields. This will aid in identifying and diagnosing issues, predicting the resilience levels of potential candidates, and developing the current staff.

Further Development of this Paper

Currently, a literature review has been carried out. After submitting this paper to the BAM conference, I will start collecting data for the RAW scale and work engagement instrument. This step will be followed by analysing the data, writing up the paper, and submitting it to the Journal of Organisational Behaviour by the end of December 2022.

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