

THE ROLE OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS TOWARDS EMPLOYEE RESILIENCE: THE CASE OF PRIVATE EDUCATORS IN KOTA KINABALU, SABAH

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ABSTRACT

Employees' capacity to deal with unfavourable circumstances, such as job intensification, organisational change, and work stress, will be enhanced if they have resilience. Despite an increase in study interest in the topic of employee resilience, little is known about how essential social support at work, such as supportive leadership and co-worker support, impacts workers' capacity to survive in difficult circumstances. Therefore, this paper aims to understand the role of support systems in enhancing educators' resilience in private sectors. It focuses on the types of support systems that the educators received that make them stay working in private college. The study was conducted among educators in three different private colleges in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. In – depth interview was used to collect the data for this study. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that educators stay in an organization even though faced many challenges due to the following factors: supportive leader, co-worker support and family members encouragement. The findings of this study can be applied into organization retention practices, especially during this pandemic.

Keywords: employee resilience, support systems, human resource management

1.0 INTRODUCTION

An educator's goal is to produce students who will be slightly elevated learners, with job happiness and satisfaction in their career, as well as the ability to sustain their inspiration, dedication, and passion for many years. While this objective may be realised for certain graduates, several nations (such as the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia) are concerned about educator turnover rates. The first five years of a lecturer's career may be particularly vulnerable, with estimates ranging from 40 to 50 percent of early career educators abandoning the field in various nations during that period (García and Weiss, 2019; Fraser and Lefty, 2018; Gallant and Riley, 2014). Additionally, in light of the worldwide situation, the expansion of the Covid-19 pandemic has affected not just business activity but also daily activities that require adaptation to the new situation. Same goes in educational institutions, where the pandemic brings unforeseen challenges in terms of managing its various stakeholders effectively including academics, administrative staff, researchers and students (Nandy, Lodh and Tang, 2021). The radical change in the social environment due to the pandemic has placed people in unfavourable circumstances as they are compelled to conform to the new standard. Educator stress and burnout (Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020; Nowland, Necka, & Cacioppo, 2018; Kyriacou, 2011; Schlichte, Yssel, and Merbler, 2005) as well as poor pre-service preparation for the realities of educators' job (Demetriou, Wilson, and Winterbottom, 2009) have been identified as factors in why educators quit.

Focusing on why educators stay in the line of work, the factors that keep them going, the resources they use to get through challenges, and how they can develop resilience and thrive rather than just survive in their jobs (Beltman, Mansfield, and Price, 2011) is an alternative approach to the issue of educator turnover rates. While studies have identified a number of different of key contextual resources that are pertinent for educator resilience, and suggestions were made at the employee, university, and higher level of management (Day and Gu, 2014; Johnson *et al.* 2014), there are fewer studies that point to specific ways teaching can help develop educator resilience. In the United Kingdom (Sammons *et al.* 2007), Ireland (Morgan, 2011), Australia (Johnson *et al.*, 2014; Mansfield, Beltman, Price, and McConney, 2012), Europe (Wosnitza *et al.* 2013), and South Africa (Wosnitza *et al.* 2013), research projects focusing specifically on educator resilience have been conducted (Ebersohn, 2012; 2014). Educators can display resilience via the application of certain personal resources (motivation, social and emotional competence) and coping mechanisms (problem solving, goal setting, preserving work-life balance). Even yet, given the intricacy and multidimensional nature of resilience, it's unclear how this may happen and what precise options there are for educator education. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to better understand how support systems may help educators in the private sector become more resilient. It highlights the type of support systems that educators have experienced in order for them to continue working in a private institution.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies have reported that teaching is one of the most stressful jobs in many of the countries in the world (Sharmila and Lavanya, 2021). In Malaysia, this situation has also been identified by several researchers whereby educators from universities as well as schools experienced high symptoms of stress compared to any other professions (Ismail and Noor, 2016; Tai, Ng, and Lim, 2019; Zakaria and Asmawi, 2015). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected educators in a different intensity where the stresses of online teaching has triggered the ability as an educator. Due to the limitations of virtual classes, many educators are experiencing a hard time to meet the students' demands or help them to understand the lessons. Sia and Adamu (2020) reported that there are four factors that could cause stress among lecturers. First, the learning management system has to be familiar in order to conduct virtual classes. However, lecturers were given short and insufficient preparation to learn to navigate this system therefore teaching and learning may be compromised. Secondly, the weak internet service in certain areas would hinder the effectiveness of virtual learning. Thirdly, the assessment has to be changed to suit virtual learning. For example, final exams need to be converted to coursework or rather take-home exams. In addition, practical assignments such as laboratory tasks also need to be changed but at the same time still be able to achieve the learning outcomes. Last but not least, lecturers might have suffered from computer vision syndrome due to prolonged exposure to electronic devices.

Educators who are stressed and fail to cope with the problem would potentially experience unstable emotion that leads to burnout (Wu, Tseng, Tseng, Chen, Pai, and Yen, 2021). In order to prevent employees from experiencing stress during pandemics, such as COVID-19, it was found that resilience can be one of the protective variables (Serrão, Duarte, Castro, and Teixeira, 2021). Resilience is a term that refers to the personal resources that enable individuals to adjust to a variety of conditions, including job-related stress, psychological stress, burnout, and attrition (Rees *et al.* 2015). Personal resources refer to support received at home (from family members) and at work, such as colleagues and superiors. Employee resilience comprises the capability to manage resources effectively, learn from mistakes and

experience, flexible and pursue opportunities for advancement. According to Fawehinmi and Yusliza (2021), employees' resilience may be enhanced through managerial assistance, social support and support from family and friends, all of which can help an individual cope with unpleasant situations that may cause them difficulty in their everyday lives. A meta-analysis on 52 research articles by Bryan, O'Shea and MacIntyre (2017) on the conceptualization of resilience in work and sports reported that support emerged as the most frequent resource associated with resilience or buffer against stress (e.g., Arora and Rangnekar, 2014; Lu, Lee, Chang, Chou, Hsu, Lin, and Gill, 2016). Support encompasses two different concepts which are emotional and environmental support, enables individuals to develop their personal resources and aids learning and build trust which appears to be most useful in intermediate exposure to mild stress (Fletcher and Sarkar, 2016). As stated by Muhammad Taufiq Amin and Standen (2012), if someone is able to manage their current situation they will transform themselves to become more resilient worker, growing rather than preserving themselves. Study conducted by Fredrickson and Joiner (2002) found that positive emotion as a primary component of resilience support and this view in predicting an upward spiraling effect of people's positive reaction to difficulties.

Research has shown that the employees develop resilience when they receive consistent support from family and friends where without the support, they may endure work stress, which can result in job disengagement and burnout (Fawehinmi & Yusliza, 2021). It demonstrates that there is a link between the support systems in terms of family and friend support towards the resilience of employees. A study conducted among Canadian educators in order to comprehend the relationship between burnout and resilience during a pandemic found that a support system like family was one of the most protective variables (Sokal, Trudel, & Babb, 2020). Emotional support from family members is the main source of social support. Supporting the educator in daily tasks or making them feel that they are fostered can be some of the forms of emotional support. For instance, when educators encounter an imbalance between work and personal life, family members can offer support by giving a big hug, emphasizing, and listening to their problems (Van den Tooren and De Jonge, 2008). In addition, any employee in the organization failing to manage their work balance or support system, will result in a lack of focus in their daily task and it will endanger their performance and lead to poor employee resilience.

Apart from that, prior study has also shown supportive leadership as the primary contributor in employee resilience. It is perceived that the employees' enthusiasm to engage in everyday work is believed to be a result of the learning organization's emphasis on leadership support, which pushes people to perform their jobs more effectively. However, according to Fawehinmi and Yusliza (2021), the dire and peculiar situation, especially during the current outbreak of pandemic COVID-19, gives supervisors anxieties which enable them to support employee resilience. As a result, they discovered that supervisor support for employees' resilience is negligible. Besides, workplace support may not always have an effect on employees' resilience if they are comfortable communicating their anxieties with family members and friends (Wang *et al.*, 2017). Harland *et al.* (2005) give evidence that a leader is optimistic about the organization's future may not necessarily give the employee additional confidence that he or she can cope with a specific work challenge. Moreover, it is also possible that the impact of the leader's inspiration can motivate subordinate and employee resilience, and it may be moderated by other factors in the situation, for example, the nature of the relationship between the employee and the leader. Cooke, Wang, and Bartram (2019) reported that a leader with high concern for people, encouraging, and supportive behaviour would lead to resilience among the employees in the Chinese banking industry. Meanwhile, Richard, Bupp, and Alzaidalsharief (2016) reported that leaders that constantly display warmth and compassion behaviour was linked to resilience outcome

among customer service employees. Furthermore, Young, Richard, Moukarzel, Steelman, and Gentry (2017) also asserted that leader displays of empathy increase employee's positive emotion, a key resilience promoting factor.

Other than relationships with a leader or supervisor, a study by Bernabé and Botia (2015) reported the association between emotional social support and resilience among Spanish firefighters. Due to repeated exposure to adversity during work, it may cause firefighters to experience a lasting emotional trauma and intense human emotion. Emotional social support from co-workers in such intense situations could promote resiliency among firefighters to buffer from the negative impact which is associated with stress. For instance, emotional support by co-workers will increase firefighters' resilience in intense events.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

To acquire a better understanding of the underlying reasons, viewpoints, and motives for this study, a qualitative approach (Leavy, 2014) was used. In order to better understand the role of support systems in enhancing educators' resilience in the private sector, in-depth, face-to-face interviews were deemed the most appropriate method for achieving explanatory process goals (Fisher 2007) and allowing the researcher to explore, identify, and clarify important elements that require further investigation (Sarantakos, 2005). In this study, fifteen (15) educators were interviewed. The approach for guiding the interview discourse was defined and any potential doubts were cleared prior to the actual interview. The goal of the research, confidentiality problems, risks, advantages, and the opportunity to right to withdraw at any time were all explained to all participants. In addition, participants had to fill out an informed consent form. An MP3 recorder was used to make an audio recording with the participants' permission. Each interview lasted around 40 to 60 minutes and was given in the following questions:

- i) What do you understand about employee resilience?
- ii) Why do you think support systems are important during this pandemic?
- iii) Who is your support systems?

The interviews were videotaped with a transcribed transcript for data coding. Because of the COVID-19 outbreaks, the interview was done through the Google Meet means to study more about the sorts of support systems that the educators have received to keep them working at private colleges. The participants were not identified by name, but rather by symbols provided to each of them, in order to maintain anonymity and neutrality. As a result, each participant was given the appropriate letters as well as an identifying number to represent them.

The interview data were analyzed to theoretical thematic analysis, which was derived from Braun and Clarke (2006), to discover, analyse, and report themes and patterns. To ensure accuracy and objectivity, an independent project assistant transcribed the audio recording. The transcripts were then given to a group of three independent researchers to identify themes. Because the study's focus is on the participants' perceptions of support systems, it sought to answer the issue based on their own experiences. To do so, the data was analysed for meaningful clusters (Creswell, 1998). The transcripts were coded using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step technique, and the themes were found using an inductive approach. The data was analysed independently by the team's researchers, and inter-rater comparisons of the themes helped to reduce researcher bias and preserve dependability.

This study is more clearly analyst-driven since it is motivated by the researcher's theoretical or analytical interest in the issue. Thematic analysis, whether theoretical or deductive, can give a more thorough examination of a certain data feature. As a result, the researcher will code for a particular study issue that corresponds to the more theoretical approach.

4.0 FINDINGS

Based on the interview conducted, the findings are presented in the following Table 1:

Table 1: Findings on Why Educators Remains Working at their Colleges

Themes	Responses & Respondents
Supportive leader	<p>I think I still working in this college because my Head of Academic always gives support to us, the team during this covid time. He will check on us whether we have any problems to conduct the online class or not. (LC1)</p> <p>My Head of School always check on me; asking about how's my online (LC2)</p> <p>He's very supportive in terms of mental support. He can understand that this online learning is new things and he asked us to take time to learn about the new tools that we can use to conduct our class online. (LC5)</p> <p>I remember there this one time I don't know how to use our new online college system, my Head of Academic help me to familiarize with it. (LC9)</p> <p>She supports and guide me during my early days at this college. Thanks to her, I managed to adapt myself to this college. (LC7)</p>
Co-worker support	<p>When I first joined this college, my colleagues help me to show around (LC3)</p> <p>During this pandemic, me and my other colleagues we always check on each other because we know.....it's not easy to through all of this alone. We never face this kind of situation before, that's why whenever we feel need someone to talk to, we will have a session with each other even though it's online. (LC4)</p> <p>Me and Ms A always encouraged each other during the lockdown. Because we know that it's never easy to face all of this alone. We text, chat even call as well. (LC6)</p> <p>When I was confirmed positive with covid, my colleagues help me to buy groceries since I cannot go out. I'm so lucky to have them. (LC5)</p>
Family members encouragement	<p>My husband and my children are the reason for me to stay. I want to support my husband as well. (LC1)</p> <p>I have my wife to support me during this lockdown. (LC4)</p> <p>Because my parents are from different state and I cannot go and</p>

	visit them due to this MCO restriction, the only way that they can support me morally is through phone and video call.....they always check on me, asking how am I doing and to look after my health. (LC6)
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5.0 DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Support systems is important in employee resilience, especially among private educators in Sabah. As such, the present studies contribute to existing literature on employee resilience and support system. Our findings showed that private educators whom received emotional support from family members, co-workers, and superiors would influence their positive behaviours in completing their tasks. This can be concluded that private educators need to have support systems that came from various sources in implementing their works efficiently. Without these supports, they would face several problems related to mental illness such as stress, depression, and anxiety. As mentioned, the educator profession is one of the most stressful jobs which required high level of patient. Therefore, educators need to have a platform to express their emotional burden and feelings when facing difficult situation in their work. By having good support systems, they would become more resilience in pursuing their career.

To be a supportive superior, leaders are urged to instil the feelings of empathy and understanding towards the educator. This is because leader is the main source of social support in the workplace (Allen, 2001). Therefore, they have the responsibility to supervise, instruct, and teach their subordinates using appropriate action in order to reduce any negative feelings. Other than that, colleagues are consider one of the most important source of support due to the fact that they are the one that tend to be the closest individual in the workplace. Educators tend to trust and communicate with colleagues over the problems they encountered. Additionally, colleagues tend to be demographically similar in terms of social status and lifestyles, therefore educators are more comfortable to talk to them. It is recommended that educators constantly communicate effectively, building mutual trust, give words of encouragement and advice, as well as provide aid in terms of material and non-material to their colleagues as a form of support. By doing so, the educators can improve their resiliency when facing difficulties and conflict in the workplace. Last but not least, our findings also found that emotional support can also be derived from family members at home. Educators need support from the their loved one, for instance, spouse is encouraged to put extra attention to the work-related issues. Moreover, the benefits of emotional support also being enhanced during the pandemic. Emotional support within our own family members is an important factor for maintaining relationships. Making an effort to call or video chat with friends and family members on a regular basis can maintain such supportive environment.

In conclusion, acknowledge the resilience as the employees support system may lead into work engagement and job satisfaction. The findings revealed that educators stay in an organization even though faced many challenges due to the following factors: supportive leader, co-worker support and family members encouragement. The findings of this study can be applied into organization retention practices, especially during this pandemic. The study will give beneficial to future researcher to conduct a similar study especially in the area of work support system and employee behaviour.

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