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Effective coping with stress and anxiety at work is a hallmark of resilience. In this article, we will explain how employees' resilience is linked with team dynamics and organizational settings, and why it is essential to adopt a multi-level perspective on resilience. We will also discuss how different levels of resilience may impact employees' health and well-being.

Employees' resilience

Now, more than ever, dealing with challenges is an essential part of our work life. That is why developing resilience in employees and leaders is a common theme in HR, and a majority of organizations offer resilience training. These programs are usually based on mindfulness interventions, such as practicing gratitude or relaxation, or on cognitive-behavioral therapy, such as goal setting or emotion regulation strategies (Joyce, Shand, Tighe, et al., 2018).

However, most of the training programs focus on the individual level of resilience and do not

look at the role that the team or organization plays in shaping resilience. Yet, co-workers and organizational factors affect employees daily and are crucial in dealing with stress. To foster resilience and well-being in employees, it is essential to look beyond a person and acknowledge the role of the environment, such as a team or organization.

Teams and resilience

Bouncing back after a stressful experience is primarily a function of a person – some people are very resilient to stress, others not so much. However, no person is an island, and the majority of jobs rely on teamwork. Now, why is the team level so important?

First, having resilient team members – people that have the skills to cope with uncertainties and stressors at work – benefits the entire team (Hartwig et al. 2020). Employees learn by observing effective coping strategies in others, and by doing so, they may adopt resilient behaviors from their co-workers. This learning process is usually present in teams that have a strong sense of shared identity. So, if employees in a particular team have a strong sense of belonging and a shared vision of what their group represents, they will strengthen each other when dealing with workplace pressures.

A second important reason to look into the team level is that work stressors affect not only individuals', but also team- performance. Employees who work together on a daily basis may face similar adversities that impact the functioning of the whole group. While individual coping mechanisms are important, it is also essential to look into how the entire team responds to a negative situation.

For example, think of a particular team in your workplace and how they coped with the COVID-19 pandemic. Though each individual in the team may have their ways of dealing with these circumstances, most likely, some team-level characteristics emerged. Did they work together to minimize the impact of the pandemic on their team-level performance? If so, how? The collective resilience of a group of employees can explain how individuals who are not resilient respond well to stressors on the team level.

Organizations and resilience

The concept of resilience has also been explored on the organizational level – resilient organizations remain stable even when facing adversity. So, what makes an organization resilient? Interestingly, it is not just resilient employees. Organizations that thrive under challenging circumstances are the ones that are aware of the adverse events and manage potential vulnerabilities, rather than ignoring them. They are also flexible, adapt to changing environments, and anticipate possible difficulties in the future. All in all, resilience on the organizational level is about agility when dealing with external factors.

Organizational factors also influence how individuals and teams deal with workplace stressors, which, in turn, impacts their well-being (McFadden, Mallett, & Leiter, 2017). For example, there is much evidence that employees who do not feel in control at work are more likely to feel exhausted and suffer from burnout. However, high resilience to stress buffers that – resilient employees are less likely to suffer from work exhaustion or burnout.

So, it is clear that having resilient employees is right for the organization. However, what is essential, is that in any resilience training, the focus should be on both the person and environment, to ensure that the training is effective. In other words, resilience can only *buffer* the negative impact of the environment, not stop it.

If you train a person how to deal with stress well, but they are frequently under much pressure from the environment, they will eventually be at risk of burnout regardless of how resilient they are. So, high resilience is not a core solution, though it's often treated as such. Redesigning jobs and workspaces to create less stressful and more thriving conditions for employees is equally important.

Conclusion

All in all, employee resilience and well-being are intertwined with the team they work with and their organization. To better understand how to help employees deal with ups and downs in everyday life, it is crucial to take a broader perspective and acknowledge the role of situations

and environments that shape their resilience. In this article, we explored resilience on the team- and organizational- level to better understand employees' resilience and well-being.

The key point in this post is that the experiences that people go through at work and how they feel about it result from complex interactions between a person, other people, and the organization. Taking that into account can help to create effective methods that enable employees to develop their resilience to stress.

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