IT Leaders' Experiences of Resilience During the Pandemic : An Appreciative Inquiry

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Abstract

Purpose : The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted that leaders need to have the capacity for resilience. When leaders are confronted with disruptions that are now more of a certainty than a possibility, they must have the ability to bounce back, recover, be agile, and be resilient.

Objective : To explore the resilience experiences of leaders in the information technology (IT) industry (both mid-level and senior leaders) during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, guided by the theory of self-leadership.

Method : Qualitative exploratory study using an appreciative inquiry approach based on 19 mid- and senior-level leaders, both men and women, in the IT Industry in India, chosen purposively. The data in the form of in-depth interviews were analyzed thematically.

Findings : Participants' experience of resilience during the pandemic was expressed as a capability of leaders, which is inherent in the IT industry, given its dynamism. Various facets of resilience and its impact were highlighted.

Practical Implications : The IT industry disruption is characteristic of the pandemic. Hence, understanding how leaders handled the crisis will help in training and development, talent acquisition, self-development, and a guiding pathway for budding leadership. Resilient leaders can positively impact self-leadership by inspiring individuals to develop self-leadership skills, fostering a culture within their organizations, and increasing team self-efficacy.

Originality : The resilience capabilities of the leaders in the IT industry in India has not been explored qualitatively before, especially during the pandemic.

Keywords : resilience, leadership, COVID-19, capabilities, IT industry, appreciative inquiry

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The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges to leaders across various industries, and many have had to demonstrate resilience to navigate these difficult times. Organizations needed their leaders to be resilient during the pandemic for several reasons. Firstly, leaders are crucial in navigating their organizations through crises. They are responsible for making strategic decisions determining the organization's survival (Venkatesan & Rohatgi, 2018). Secondly, the pandemic has caused unprecedented uncertainty, stress, and disruption to organizations worldwide. In this context, leaders with high levels of resilience can help their organizations overcome the challenges of the pandemic (Sehgal et al., 2022). Resilient leaders can maintain a positive outlook, adjust to changing circumstances, and motivate their teams to overcome adversity (Khatri et al., 2022). Thirdly, the pandemic has compelled organizations to implement novel working practices like remote work, which requires excellent leadership abilities to keep teams motivated, connected, and productive (Arora & Pratibha, 2022). Therefore, organizations prioritizing developing and supporting resilient leaders can enhance their ability to navigate the ongoing challenges and emerge stronger from the pandemic (Dirani et al., 2020; Sehgal et al., 2022). Resilience is essential for leaders in the industry because of the rapidly changing technology, high-stress environment, risk of failure, and need to retain talented employees.

Initial studies on resilience emphasize the role of genetics (Maul et al., 2020; Smeeth et al., 2021). According to some psychologists, resilient people develop resiliency skills more effortlessly than those with a head start. Some argue that certain people are just born resilient. Although there is some truth to it, empirical evidence finds resilience—be it in survivors of traumatic incidents, people pushed to the edge, or even in children—can be learned (Shean, 2015; Vella & Pai, 2019). When circumstances unfold, bricoleurs catacomb through, conjuring up possibilities where others are confounded.

In a pandemic like COVID-19, which indiscriminately paralyzed organizations, the importance is seen in leaders having a capability for resilience. This makes it possible to deal with unforeseen circumstances effectively. It helps them bounce back from crises and foster future success. An important role is played by resilience in leadership. It steers the organization in times of disruption and crisis (Lintz, 2020).

To endure uncertainty in the environment and promote future success, leaders will be required to deal with the manifestations of the unanticipated. In such a scenario, a capacity for resilience must be developed to enable them to react effectively to unforeseen events. This will help them benefit from incidents that can endanger an establishment's subsistence (Eliot, 2020). Additionally, resilience embraces a facet of adaptation (Silva et al., 2023). Adaptation helps leaders emerge stronger out of a calamity. This attribute differentiates resilience from robustness. Robustness is the capability of a system to sustain its operations despite any disruptions (Ribeiro & Gonçalves, 2019). Agility, flexibility, and robustness, though similar constructs differ in function compared to resilience. Although agility is the capacity to swiftly identify opportunities, pivot course, and steer clear of obstacles (Ahammad et al., 2020). Furthermore, flexibility, as the capacity to quickly adapt to environmental shifts (Seetharaman, 2020), has some common elements with resilience. The explicit accents of the constructs are inclined to vary. Flexibility and agility are essential for handling daily problems and changes, while resilience is vital to success in unexpected crises or threats (Santoro et al., 2020). Therefore, as organizations face increasing challenges and uncertainties, resilient leadership is becoming increasingly valuable and in demand as a vital capability for leaders.

In today's pandemic-hit organizations, resilience is a topic of great discussion. One may ponder that resilience is not known beforehand, but it is experienced and brought to light in certain situations. After being tried and tested, one comes to realize they have it. Can this, however, be left to chance, or are there signs in terms of capabilities that this attribute can be explored and ascertained is a critical question that arose in the minds of the researchers. Resilience also refers to the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten the viability, function, or development of that system (Masten, 2014). Thus, resilience includes organizations and human behavior. It facilitates the ability to thrive in disaster situations, such as the pandemic.

We are looking for this capability—the capacity to adapt. Resilience is "a process to harness resources to sustain well-being" (Panter-Brick & Leckman, 2013). Furthermore, resilience is seen as a learning form to survive using positive adjustment in the present adversity and strengthening capabilities to face future adversities (Reyes et al., 2021). Resilience is also associated with the capability and ability of an element to return to a stable state after a disruption (Burnard & Bhamra, 2011).

However, it was found that no academic literature was found on the resilience capabilities of leadership for the information technology (IT) sector in the Indian scenario. However, global health issues, recession, and climate changes in the recent past point out exploring resilience as critical.

Hence, this research addresses the abovementioned knowledge gaps by exploring the resilience experiences that carry leaders through turmoil. By attempting to answer this question, our research will contribute to the knowledge of what makes some leaders bounce back while others may buckle under pressure.

The theoretical framework that guides the study is self-leadership, which is the practice of setting goals for one's own life and finding the motivation to succeed. Charles C. Manz introduced it in a 1983 text on organizational management and involved directing oneself toward naturally motivated tasks and managing oneself to complete necessary work (Manz, 1986). Self-leadership is now recognized as a way to facilitate behaviors that produce good leaders and is a practice for personal well-being and positive psychology.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore how leaders exhibit their resilience capabilities and why these capabilities contribute to their resilience. Sharing their stories and adding meaning to their lived experiences on resilience will enable the researchers to further explore the resilience capabilities of leaders in IT organizations as a contribution to leadership studies. In addition, exploring this topic will likely contribute to the existing yet limited literature on resilience in leadership development (Ledesma, 2014).

Methods

Study Area

The study was done with participants from the IT industry in Bengaluru, Karnataka, India. Bengaluru is known as the Silicon Valley of India or the IT capital of India. Bengaluru (formerly Bangalore) is home to India's tech elite and has more than 67,000 registered IT companies and about 12,000 full-time working companies. As a result, choosing Bengaluru as a geographical location to explore leaders of the IT field gives us a very balanced population.

Participant Recruitment

Participants for this study were referred by human resource professionals from HR associations, were sourced through LinkedIn, and were referred by other participants. Senior- and mid-level leaders, both men and women, from the IT industry in Bengaluru, India, participated. A total of 19 leaders were purposively chosen. The criteria were as follows: (a) authority figure/strategic decision maker in the organization, (b) team leader/project leader/manager in the organization, (c) individuals who "lead" and influence individuals, teams, or whole organizations, (d) individuals who have made an impact in the organization by taking the organization to greater heights, (e) those in the responsible office, (f) individuals who have been resilient in times of crisis, able to tide over unforeseen circumstances, be it a calamity or disaster, (g) individuals who have been creative in their approach and brought innovation for organizational success, and (h) individuals directly dealing with and

supporting human growth and development. The participants who could tick a minimum of three of the above criteria for leadership as per the study were included. Furthermore, mid-level leaders needed 5–12 years of leadership, and senior-level leaders needed a minimum of 13 years of experience as a leader in any organization, with a minimum of 5 years of their career in the IT field, and could provide informed consent.

Design

An exploratory qualitative study that examined multiple realities of the participants was conducted under the guidance of social constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology.

Tools

Due to the ongoing pandemic, in-depth online interviews (IDIs) were used to obtain data. IDIs were chosen because we wanted to explore the participant's experiences. It is most suited as a tool to collect rich data on the participant's personal experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Between March and December 2021, 19 leaders in the IT industry were interviewed. The appreciative inquiry (AI) approach was adopted to gather their success stories as leaders. AI was selected because it explores the best of what is and accentuates the positive rather than eliminates the negative (Cantore & Cooperrider, 2013).

Data Collection

Participant information sheets giving study details were sent to all participants, and oral consent was recorded at the beginning of the interviews. A semi-structured interview guide based on AI was prepared in English. Research participants were asked about their resilience strategy, resilience as a capability of leadership, and the role resilience played in coping with the present pandemic. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was conducted up to the point of data saturation. The interviews were done in English. To ensure honest responses from participants in their study, the researchers invested significant time in building rapport with them before the interviews. The participants' language, laughter, use of specific phrases, and addressing the interviewer by name indicated that trust had been established. Transcription from the audio recording for coding and analysis was started within 48 hours of the interview. All participants were given alphanumerical codes to maintain anonymity. All code names started with the letter Re. Senior leaders were prefixed with S, mid-level leaders with M, women

Table 1. *Participant Profile*

Code	Gender	Designation	Years in Leadership
		Senior Men Participants	
ReSM1	Men	Director - HR	20 years
ReSM2	Men	Director and GM South India	20 years
ReSM3	Men	Senior VP Technology and MD	13 years
ReSM4	Men	Senior Manager	13 years
ReSM5	Men	VP and Executive Director	18 years
ReSM6	Men	Senior Director of Human Resources	20 years
		Senior Women Participants	
ReSF1	Women	Director Human Capital	17 years
ReSF2	Women	Senior Manager	14 years

ReSF3	Women	CHRO	22 years
ReSF4	Women	Founder and CEO	15 years
ReSF5	Women	Managing Director	15 years
Mid-Level Men Participants			
ReMM1	Men	Senior Service Delivery Manager	5 years
ReMM2	Men	Head Talent Acquisition, India	8 years
ReMM3	Men	Senior HR Manager	10 years
ReMM4	Men	Product Manager	10 years
ReMM5	Men	Product Line Manager/Product Marketing Consultant	10 years
Mid-Level Women Participants			
ReMF1	Women	Director	8 years
ReMF2	Women	HR Head	12 years
ReMF3	Women	Head Talent Acquisition and Leadership	12 years

with F, and men with M. It ended with a sequential numerical code. Hence, for example, the first senior male leader would be given a codename as RSM1 and the first mid-level woman leader as RMF1 (Table 1).

Data Analysis and Results

Data were coded, and content was analyzed. The principles of grounded theory were followed (Passey, 2020; Ponterotto & Grieger, 2007). Thematic analysis (familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes) was used to generate themes (Clarke & Braun, 2017). In the first cycle, primary codes were developed inductively based on the participants' experience during the pandemic. In the second cycle, a further grouping of these codes into subcategories and then categorization was undertaken. Finally, themes were generated. This was done based on common attributes and keeping the research question in mind. ATLAS.ti (v8) was used for coding the data and forming categories.

The Research Process Through the Primary Researcher's Positionality

All the interviews were conducted by the first author. Despite being an academic and not from the corporate industry being studied, she felt she was at a disadvantage in the power balance between the researcher and participants. She was unsure how to approach senior-level leaders and whether they would be comfortable opening up to her. However, when she presented her study, she found that many senior leaders were willing to give her their time and share their stories. It is unclear whether this was due to the pandemic, but many participants expressed gratitude for being reminded of the highlights of their careers that they had forgotten. The researcher's active listening and AI approach enabled her to delve deeper into the participants' experiences and extract more details. Furthermore, her position as an outsider proved advantageous, as the participants felt compelled to provide a comprehensive account of their experiences.

Ethics

This data is part of a more extensive study approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee of Kasturba Hospital & Kasturba Medical College, MAHE, Manipal, dated 02/06/2021 with no 804-2020 and CTRI approval CTRI/2021/03/031765.

Findings

The findings of this study are divided into three parts per the themes that emerged from the data coding. First is an insight into the IT sector and the participants' experiences. The second part focuses on resilience as a capability, and participants share why "resilience capabilities" are essential for leaders in the IT industry. The third part summarizes the participants' experiences during the pandemic and their role in resilience (refer to Figure 1).

Figure 1. *The Themes that Emerged from the Qualitative Interviews*
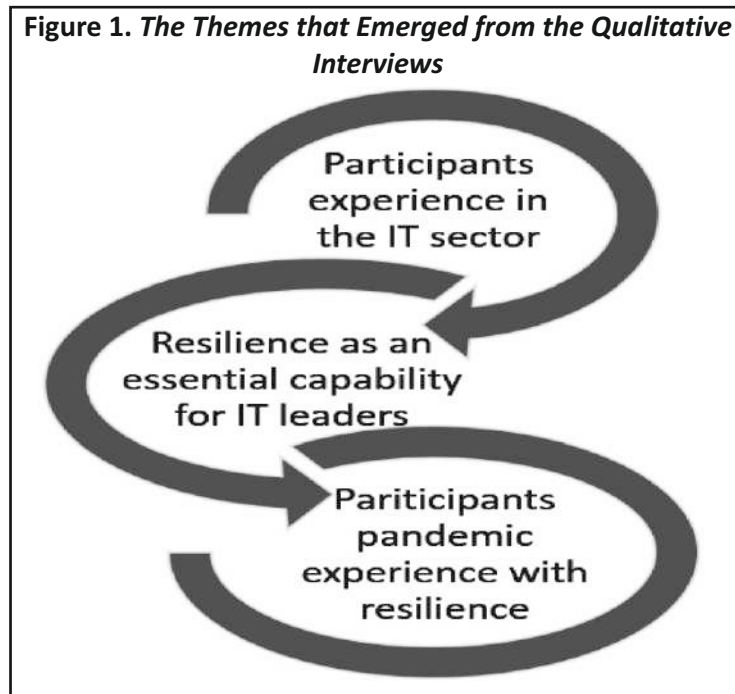
The IT Industry

Participants shared that the IT industry is highly dynamic and challenging, requiring constant movement. Participant (ReSF2) expressed that she often felt that they were covering much ground, but, looking back, she had not moved much. The industry is also characterized by a highly disruptive environment where change is the norm, the unexpected is the expected, growth is inevitable, and learning is the pathway to success. In such a scenario, resilience as a capability seems to be inbuilt into leadership.

> I have seen leaders who delivered well under pressure … particularly IT fellows. They would deliver on their numbers and targets and things like that. So, at the end of the day, they always deliver.… Today people are so well trained; it has become like their muscle memory to perform under pressure. (ReSM1)

Furthermore, participants added that there was no time for complacency. Being alert, being informed, and being prepared is the ground rule. This was made explicit from what the participants shared during the interview.

They expressed that being updated with recent developments in their area of work and allied subjects is essential. For such upskilling/learning to be effective, it is required to be consistent with the workspace's fast-changing and unexpected demands. Referring to this ability, a participant (ReSM5) commented :

You have to be an expert in many things, and then you know, your shelf life is very small. (ReSM5)

In the IT industry, it has become imperative for leaders to model a behavior of resilience not just to inculcate resilient leadership but to instill in their employees a culture of resilience to adapt to the new policies and cultures evolving out of mergers and acquisitions and dynamic changes in technology.

Resilience as a Capability and its Importance in the IT Industry

Resilience is a capability that could be inbuilt as it has been learned and developed from childhood or over time through different exposures and experiences. It gave the participants the strength to take on challenges. It included a clear vision of how to cope. It strongly encompasses knowledge of self, that is, one's talents, strengths, and weaknesses. It also included soft skills, such as communication, active listening, empathy, genuineness, networking, people-centeredness, and supportive skills. Participants shared their understanding of resilience. A participant (ReSF3) said that it was a process involving one's whole self-participating. It is also about the knowledge of one's vulnerability, not as a weakness but in being authentic and aware (ReeSF4). Trusting was also part of being resilient. To be truly resilient, evaluating and analyzing the environment, the early signs, and available data is necessary. Participants further felt that resilience was imperative to survive.

As far as resilience is concerned, it is a process. It is a process that works with your mind. It is a process that works with your body. It is a process that works with your emotional self. It is all of that. Because in my mind, resilience is not just standing there and facing it; it is also about knowing when to retract and save yourself. And then get up again. (ReSF3)

Given the highly fluid, volatile, and dynamic nature of the organization's administrative and technical functioning to meet the market's demands, participants felt they needed to adapt quickly to the organization's newer expectations and policies. In some cases, the organizational policy changed every three months. The importance of resilience in the IT industry was highlighted by a participant (ReSF1) who felt the training in the IT sector gave her various assignments. This also shaped her grit and determination to venture into new roles that were not known but had to be explored and learned quickly while having the adventurous spirit to look forward to the journey.

So, I think I have been fortunate to get assignments or be in situations that allowed me to take on unchartered territories. I was always thrown into challenges where you often do not have the way ahead; you must find it as you go along. And that is the third point I spoke about resilience: OK, let us see where this journey takes you. (ReSF1)

Participants spoke about the ability to deliver under pressure. In today's context, they felt employees, including those in leadership, had been trained to show the expected results within the given timeline. At times, they would be overstretched in their work to meet the targets set forth by the organization, yet they continue to follow this work pattern. They found an important attribute a leader must have during these unexpected conditions.

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Delivering in a time-bound manner is so much part and parcel of this industry that it has become part of their muscle memory. Furthermore, disruption happens continuously, and every cell in the body is trained to act or react to change and disruption. Real stress would be considered when working outside one's comfort zone, created by this pandemic. Hence, resilience is an essential capability for a leader in the IT industry.

'Participants' Experiences During the Pandemic

In the process of realizing that resilience is an important capability, the participants shared their experiences of surviving amidst the COVID-19 pandemic that caught the entire world unaware. The participants had to identify new paradigms of coping. Leaders in the IT industry shared how the rigors of this pandemic brought to the forefront capabilities needed to survive.

The most important learning for a participant was that of agility. Agility in the sense of being nimble, flexible, and expandable. The participant (ReSF5) shared:

> To adopt change, one needs to be agile and nimble in learning new ways of working to keep up with the crunching timelines that this pandemic brought, added to an already fast-tracked industry. (ReSF5)

To be agile, one cannot afford to be a perfectionist in this scenario, felt another participant. The focus is not on making the perfect key but on making sure the key fits the lock.

> I think the significant factor in today's world is having a growth mindset and having an extremely open and flexible .... You know, having the capability to learn. Learning agility is very, very important in today's world. (ReSF3)

Among senior leaders, ReSF4 said that having some bandwidth during the pandemic helped them to quickly assess the market needs and know how they could positively contribute. ReSF3 brought to light the importance of trust. She felt that trusting the situation, trusting herself, her team members, her colleagues, and the organization, was a must. She also felt that letting go after giving it her best, being detached from the outcome, and seeking validation from stakeholders was appurtenant.

> I think as it comes and then take the learnings and move on. But I would say my journey of resilience has really been about going within and reflecting. (ReSF1)

ReSM6 felt the impact of the inconsistency of leadership, which was highlighted during the pandemic. He said that when leadership is not following a consistent outlook, it leads to a lot of time and resources wasted in reinventing the wheel. Inconsistencies in the organization's policies further hindered the handling of the pandemic. Another participant (ReSM1) shared that the pandemic highlighted the element of leadership being exposed and tested where true capabilities rise.

Among the mid-level leaders, there was no significant difference noted from the senior counterparts except for the participant (ReMF3), who shared that there are many decisions that managers at their level need to take. They know the problems at ground level, but the structure sometimes is such that they cannot make these decisions without the top management's concurrence, which can put much work in the reverse gear. The leader can facilitate this by introducing a flatter structure with a strong communication and information channel. Other participants (ReMM3) highlighted the need for a people-centered empathetic approach during the pandemic and shared their experiences supporting employees. They provided alternatives to tackle the pandemic even as the organization was reeling under pressure. A participant (ReMM2) believed that regardless of a pandemic, preparedness should be a feature in a volatile environment, such as an IT industry.

Discussion

This study aims to explore the resilience experiences of leadership during the pandemic and ascertain what resilient capabilities came to play among IT industry leaders. Resilience capabilities enhance the leader's and the firm's ability to influence performance by inculcating the workforce's capacity to overcome uncertainty (Bustinza et al., 2019). Vera D. Samba argued that there is a need to shift from the concept of "resilience as bouncing back to normal" to the concept of "resilience as thriving," which entails a blend of resources and capabilities (Vera et al., 2021).

In this study, participants highlighted the volatile and disruptive nature of the IT industry, where it was standard procedure to have a resilience strategy, which was called a business continuity plan (BCP) with standard operational procedures (SOP) from the micro to the macro level. Participants also mentioned that leaders, irrespective of a pandemic, are weaponized with information that helps put systems in place, protecting the company and the employees, and equipping them to handle any contingency. An important resilience capability is an ability to be a visionary, to have foresight and predictability. The usage of analytics to help tell tomorrow's story is imperative. Leaders also set the trend and impart a culture of resilience to their team and the organization. In a study conducted in a Jordanian organization, a high adherence to business continuity management as per their organization culture positively impacted their cultures and recovery ability. This has been salubrious for creating resilient organizations (Sawalha et al., 2015). Leaders distribute accountability for BCPs to business line managers and integrate it into the change management system by providing their employees with personalized information. This grows a culture of resilience, where employees are powered to respond to events without arduous recovery procedures and hierarchical response. The case study of Big Brown Box Inc. showed that all companies should continually exercise operational resilience to prepare for setbacks. The study also disclosed that for an organization to engage in exploration and experimentation proactively, they need to develop resilience through rehearsing and training exercises (Välikangas & Romme, 2012).

Furthermore, through participants' shared experiences, this study shows that resilience is essential in the IT industry. Leaders proactively reacted to the pandemic, enabling the workforce to continue to be productive in the altered conditions by working from home. In these stressful times, as they grappled with a known unknown, capabilities of trust, agility, adaptability, grit, determination, self-awareness, and confidence emerged. In this, our study is in line with other studies to highlight the need for transformational leaders (Mohan Venkata Ram & Shishigu, 2011) where empathy and emotional intelligence (Mishra et al., 2022; Sangeetha & Natarajan, 2019) and trust as a mediator (Prabhu & Koodamara, 2022; Sharma & Yadav, 2018) increase engagement of the workforce. Ready for any interruptions to routine, leaders took the path of cautious optimism to return to equilibrium. The capability of leaders to unlearn and relearn, to lay down previous knowledge and yet use experience, that is, to look anew, and the capabilities of developing and implementing solutions stand out. Other studies also highlight that learning agility is an essential antecedent for leaders looking to promote organizational performance through an agile workforce (Aldianto et al., 2021; Tua Ritonga et al., 2021; Vatsa & Bhatnagar, 2021). The new learning is that IT leaders seemed more prepared and resilient because they were already geared by the disruption, volatile, ambiguous, complex, and uncertain situations characteristic of the IT industry in India, like that of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Implications

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

Theoretical implications of a leader's resilience in self-leadership are significant. Leaders who possess resilience

can adapt to changes and overcome adversity. This can result in increased self-efficacy, a key component of self-leadership. When individuals face challenging situations, their self-efficacy or belief in their ability to accomplish a task can be diminished. However, resilient leaders can be role models and inspire others to adopt a similar mindset.

Furthermore, resilient leaders can help individuals develop the skills to become more self-reliant and self-directed. Self-leadership is about taking control of one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors to achieve personal and professional goals. Resilient leaders can help individuals build the self-leadership skills necessary to navigate difficult situations and achieve their goals.

In addition, resilient leaders can foster a culture of self-leadership within their organizations. When leaders model resilience, it can create a positive work environment that encourages individuals to take responsibility for their success. This can lead to increased motivation, higher levels of job satisfaction, and improved performance. Overall, the theoretical implications of a leader's resilience on self-leadership suggest that resilient leaders can inspire individuals to develop the skills necessary to achieve their goals, create a positive work environment that encourages self-leadership, and foster increased self-efficacy among their teams.

This study has found specific capabilities that strengthen resilience in leadership, especially during a disruptive period. It also highlights that resilient leaders develop resilient teams, which has a multiplier effect throughout the organization. Leaders' who are resilient can adapt to changes and overcome adversity, which can have a positive impact on their organizations. Here are some managerial implications of a leader's resilience:

✤ *Improved Decision-Making.* Resilient leaders are better able to handle complex situations and make informed decisions that benefit the organization. They can also consider multiple perspectives, which leads to better decision-making.

✤ *Positive Organizational Culture.* A resilient leader can create a positive work environment that fosters growth and encourages employees to overcome challenges. This can increase motivation and productivity, resulting in better business outcomes.

✤ *Role Modeling.* A leader who demonstrates resilience sets an example for employees to follow. When team members see their leader persevere through adversity, they may be inspired to do the same, resulting in a more resilient and motivated team.

✤ *Talent Retention.* A resilient leader is better equipped to handle employee turnover and retain top talent. Employees are more likely to stay with an organization if they feel supported during challenging times.

✤ *Crisis Management.* Resilient leaders can better manage crises and unexpected events. They can remain calm and focused under pressure, which can help the organization navigate through difficult times and emerge stronger.

Overall, resilient leaders can positively impact their organizations by improving decision-making, creating a positive work environment, inspiring employees, retaining top talent, and managing crises effectively. Therefore, these findings will help human resource management professionals design training and development programs for leaders. They will also have an insight into attributes to look out for in leaders in talent acquisition.

Conclusion

From the participants' shared experiences, it is learned that resilience is a capability learned and developed through different experiences on coping. Through knowledge of self and others, using various psychosocial and cognitive skills, every leader can be trained through exposure and opportunity, as it is a learning process.

However, certain individual traits and attitudes can further this process. Resilient leaders play a vital role in growing a resilient culture for the organization. The AI approach for the interview guide is ideal as we saw leaders engaged and enthusiastic to share their success stories. Though being very senior leaders and having busy schedules, they were happy to invest much of their time in the interview.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Future Research

It is important to recognize the different limitations that this study has. First, qualitative methods may seem a limitation, as they are not used to generalize knowledge. However, to gain a more nuanced understanding of resilience experiences, qualitative research is compelling. Second, despite the substantial dataset in this study, it cannot be assumed that the findings provide a basis for universally applicable theories on resilient leadership. Furthermore, researchers may quantitatively validate these findings. They can also use the findings to research the capability to measure leadership success and growth. This study allows future researchers to quantitatively explore resilience capabilities in leaders identified by this exploratory qualitative study to make it more generalizable.

Authors' Contribution

Asha Albuquerque Pai conceived the idea, developed the qualitative design, and conducted this paper's data collection, transcription, and analysis. Dr. Nikhil Pazhoothundathil N. contributed to developing the qualitative design and the methodology. Dr. Lena Ashok contributed to the analysis of the study. Dr. Ciraj A. M. and Dr. Varalakshmi C. S. reviewed the final paper.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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