

Resilience Scales

User's Guide Version 1.0



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Introduction

"Our greatest glory is not in 'never falling' but in rising every time we fall."

Confucius

Confucius gives us the heart of what this User's Guide is about. It describes the development of the Resilience Scales Questionnaire (RSQ) which provides a way to monitor this essential element of people's character. As a concept it is a complex mixture of attitudes, emotions and behaviours all of which define how a person deals with life's challenges. However, it is arguably one of the most important attributes that aid both success and satisfaction in life as illustrated by Warren Bennis:

"The leaders I met, whatever walk of life they were from, whatever institutions they were presiding over, always referred back to the same failure - something that happened to them that was personally difficult, even traumatic, something that made them feel that desperate sense of hitting bottom - as something they thought was almost a necessity. It's as if at that moment the iron entered their soul; that moment created the resilience that leaders need."

Warren G. Bennis

Resilience is a difficult area to isolate and measure because it is so clearly linked to our whole sense of identity and self belief as illustrated by the following quote:

"We find that people's beliefs about their efficacy affect the sorts of choices they make in very significant ways. In particular, it affects their levels of motivation and perseverance in the face of obstacles. Most success requires persistent effort, so low self-efficacy becomes a self-limiting process. In order to succeed, people need a sense of self-efficacy, strung together with resilience to meet the inevitable obstacles and inequities of life."

Albert Bandura

The Resilience Scales Questionnaire (RSQ) has carved out the key components of the concept of Resilience so that all those who work in this area will find it useful to use alongside other tools, models and interventions.

Section One: The Concept of Resilience

Background

Resilience is a term used in everyday life and, whilst we may all have our own picture of what it means, there is a commonality which may be summarised as:

‘the ability to face the challenges and disappointments we meet in life and to come back with resolve, determination and feeling stronger than before.’

To elaborate, it means working with adversity in such a way that one comes through with greater resolve; it means turning adversity into a learning experience; it involves facing life’s difficulties with courage and patience – and refusing to give up. It is the quality that allows people to rebound from misfortune, hardships and traumas. Those who demonstrate resilience show a determination to embrace all that makes life worth living, even in the face of overwhelming odds.’

To understand it in a different way, we can turn to one of the most iconic examples of resilience – Nelson Mandela who survived 27 years in captivity where he experienced both physical and mental abuse and yet emerged with dignity in his bearing and forgiveness in his heart. There are countless other examples from involving similarly extreme conditions, such as people who have been kept hostage for many years or people that have been made repeatedly redundant. The resilient ones are those who do not give up and who gain from the experience.

According to Steinhardt from the University of Texas at Austin:

Resilience is defined as the process of bouncing back and fully recovering in the face of change and stressful situations. Being resilient doesn't mean a person won't experience difficulty or stress. However, resilient individuals respond to stress in ways that help them not only recover, but grow and thrive¹.

According to Fontana and Wagner :

Robustness is the ability of a system to maintain function even with changes in internal structure or external environment.

According to the Harvard Medical School :

Robustness is a characteristic of systems with the ability to heal, self-repair, self-regulate, self-assemble, and/or self-replicate.

¹ From <http://www.edb.utexas.edu/steinhardt/index.htm>

The Resilience Scales Questionnaire (RSQ) Model

There have been many attempts to measure aspects of Resilience. There is no doubt that the Big Five model of personality identifies a key element of the concept when it measures neuroticism (sometimes called anxiety or emotional stability) and various questionnaires identify various symptoms or facets such as anger, depression, frustration, nervousness etc. Psychologists are divided about how much resilience is a basic, physiological disposition (possibly innate) and how much it is a learned response. The RSQ model was initially developed by reviewing existing measures (16PF, NEO, HPI, HDS, EPP, BarOn, OSI), bringing in ideas from the Positive Psychology movement², reviewing Emotional Intelligence research and from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. However, through various stages of empirical trialling and analyses the model evolved to the five scale version described below:

	Inner world	Outer world
Cognitive (Mental Orientation)	<p><u>Self Esteem</u> (How I see myself)</p> <p>Sense of own value, capability, self-belief, superiority/inferiority.</p>	<p><u>Optimism</u> (How I see the world)</p> <p>Expectations of outcomes, interpretation of events, positive, optimistic versus seeing the worst</p>
Behavioural (Behaviour pattern)	<p><u>Self-Discipline</u> (How I manage myself)</p> <p>Sense of purpose, effectiveness, appropriateness, achieves goals, not erratic or unpredictable</p>	<p><u>Control</u> (How I manage situations)</p> <p>Style towards others, controlling, flexible, tolerant, versus easily frustrated, demanding, rigid and obsessional.</p>
Emotional (Emotional Experience)	<p><u>Emotional Non-defensiveness</u> (How I feel and react to people and situations)</p> <p>General mood, reactions, happiness, energy and generosity towards others versus tensions, hesitations, anxieties and a tendency to blame others.</p>	

² see Martin Seligman's 'Learned Optimism'

Applications

An understanding of resilience is important in many areas of people's lives. Some of the areas in which it is most commonly applied are introduced below, though this should not be seen as an exhaustive list and users of the RSQ are encouraged to adapt and build on these examples.

- Personal development and increasing personal resilience
- Emotional literacy development and understanding others
- Managing others and situations
- Developing support within a team

Section Two: Development of the RSQ questionnaire

There have been 5 previous versions of the RSQ as it has undergone increasing refinement over a period of 5 years. Initially 272 items were written to give comprehensive coverage of the 6 facets, with leeway to experiment with a range of concepts. These were considered sufficient to provide a comprehensive map of the values domain.

The items were written as single statements to be answered using a 6-point Likert scale. The statements were reviewed by three occupational psychologists as well as other experienced assessors to ensure that they were clear and reflected the defined constructs. Reviewers were instructed to think of how they would answer the statements themselves and also how it would apply to a person they knew well. A number of changes were made to the statements as a result of this review and a final screening conducted to ensure that none of the items could be construed as offensive or as asking for information of a private nature. The RSQ then went through an extensive period of refinement as follows:

Version 1 (272 items in 2005, based on a sample of 276):

The first questionnaire was put together in 2005 and involved 272 items using a Likert scale. This questionnaire was trialled on a sample of 228 and both item analyses and factor analyses were conducted. The results of these analyses supported the view that the data was best represented by 3 factors that matched the Behavioural, Emotional and Cognitive dimensions rather than the Inside and Outside aspects of the model.

Version 2 (173 items in 2006, based on a sample of 385)

The second version used 173 items and was an attempt to reproduce the factor structure using bipolar statements (or words). This version also introduced a Faking scale. Bi-polar scales were introduced to provide a balancing element which has the effect of reducing social desirability and increasing the range of the scale to be used. (e.g. both joyful and serious can be viewed positively). The data from the first version informed the way in which pairings could be trialled. The results suggested that there was too great an overlap between one of the Emotional facets (Emotional State) and one of the Cognitive facets (Self Esteem).

Version 3 (105 items in 2007, based on a sample of 785)

The third version of the questionnaire was trialled having analysed the reasons for the overlap between Emotional State and Self-Esteem and was re-defined and the former was re-labelled 'Emotional Non-defensiveness'. The results showed high internal consistencies but some of the factor loadings suggested that some items could still be improved.

Version 4 (125 items in 2008, based on a sample of 1108)

The factor analysis from the third version enabled us to create a longer version from which we would select the items for the final version.

Version 5 (90 items in 2009, based on a sample of 2152)

This is the final version of the questionnaire and was developed after factor analysis and item analysis of the data resulting from Version 4.

RSQ User Guide pages 1-11

We hope you have enjoyed exploring this free introductory version of the Resilience Users Guide. We would be delighted to get your feedback and to discuss your thoughts and reactions.

In addition, we hope that you have got a flavour of what the RSQ is all about. We realise that not all the features that make this approach innovative and practical have been explained, but you will get some idea by referring to the Table of Contents and the full version will give you more detail about:

1. how the RSQ was developed
2. the practicalities of administering in order to engage the person in the process
3. requirements for both the software and/or the paper versions
4. ideas about conducting a review (feedback) session
5. the technical psychometric details related to construction, reliability and validity
6. details of the normative samples

If you are interested in the complete version, (normally provided to our affiliated partners and clients as part of our training courses) or in discussing your interest further, we welcome you to get in touch by filling in the [Contact Form](#)