

HOW RESILIENT ARE CIVIL SERVANTS FROM THE ROMANIAN RURAL ENVIRONMENT? AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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Abstract

Introduction and scope

Romanian public administration has gone through multiple processes of transformation and innovation, but it still faces multiple issues not only in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, outputs and transparency but also in terms of the attention paid to the needs of civil servants, who are often seen as simple cogs in a machine. Although resilience can significantly influence the performance of employees and organizations, the concept is under-analyzed in the case of Romanian civil servants. The present research aimed to identify the level of resilience of rural civil servants, the main factors affecting resilience and the main measures to strengthen the resilience which are currently used (knowingly or unknowingly) by local institutions.

Methodology

An online questionnaire was sent to rural public institutions between December 2019 and January 2020, obtaining 103 responses from civil servants working in 19 rural communities from multiple geographical and development regions in Romania.

Results and discussion

The data shows that the level of resilience of civil servants in rural areas is 81.5 points out of 105 maximum points, which indicates a relatively high level of resilience. According to the theory, the main factors that affect resilience refer to: working conditions, quantity of tasks, stress and pressure at work, lack of flexibility, but also lack of experience, shifting/transferring tasks from one person to another, verbal violence/aggression and the lack of patience of citizens. According to our results, general and specific work experience in the public sector (the more experience in the workforce the higher the level of resilience), self-confidence (more self-confidence increases resilience) and age (younger employees tend to have a lower level of resilience than older people) seem to be relevant factors. Other factors such as workload, the level of education, stress, gender and their position/function (execution or decision-making) do not seem to affect resilience.

Applying mindfulness strategies, an efficient organization of tasks, developing skills to more effectively manage a workplace crisis situation, providing mutual support, encouraging risk-taking and eliminating

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unnecessary tasks (reduction of the number of tasks) are the main measures that can be adopted in order to improve the level of resilience.

Points for practitioners

The results are useful for practitioners because the research has identified the main problems faced by civil servants, problems which can affect the level of performance and efficiency. We believe that, based on the current study, organizations can implement specific measures to increase the resilience of their employees. Many of the institutions participating in the study requested to receive the results obtained at the end of the study, and some of them applied the proposed recommendations, thus showing the practical applications and the usefulness of the current research for public administration practitioners. The analysis of resilience and implicitly the empirical results obtained are useful for public administration practitioners and decision makers because our findings can help them better understand civil service employees, how they react to unforeseen situations, what is the status of the organization / institution from a resilience perspective and which is the capacity to recover from a shock.

Keywords: resilience, public sector employees, rural environment.

1. INTRODUCTION³

Public authorities and institutions are undergoing constant evolution and change, due to the development of technology, new and complicated problems they have to resolve (such as the Covid-19 pandemic), the pace of change taking place worldwide and globalization. All organizations, be they public, private or non-profit, are therefore focusing more and more on employee effectiveness; resilient employees are needed to meet all these challenges and transformations. Although employees with higher levels of resilience cope more easily and better with change and resilience is considered ‘a useful skill to draw on in stressful times, in addition to technical and practical skills, and is perceived as the ability to bounce back from a difficult situation’ (Bharwaney, 2020, p. 23), there is very little research conducted in Romania on the resilience of public servants (see Nastacă, 2020; Haruța, Hințea and Moldovan, 2019; Moldovan, 2019; Cotoranu and Moldovan, 2020). Resilience became even more important in the case of public institutions as the pandemic and the public policies designed to counter its effect ‘led to increasing demands on public organisations and their employees’ (Fischer *et al.*, 2022).

The theoretical research aims to analyze how the concept of ‘resilience’ is defined and what is the state of resilience in the public sector. The aim of the empirical research is to identify the level of resilience of rural civil servants, as well as to identify the main factors affecting their level of resilience, as well as to identify methods that can contribute to improving the level of resilience of rural civil servants. The research hypotheses of the study are as follows: (1) the resilience level of civil servants from rural institutions is influenced by their workload; (2) the resilience level is influenced by age, and (3) resilience level is influenced by civil servants’ seniority in the public service.

Resilience is one of the main factors that determines the success of employees and public organizations/institutions, this concept being at the basis of the formation of a resilient behavior to any pressure that may arise in the workplace, whether we are talking about financial-budgetary pressures (Moldovan, 2016a), gender discrimination (Moldovan, 2016b) or ensuring local economic development (Pavel and Moldovan, 2019). In existing research, where the focus has been on the development of resilience among employees, concepts such as ‘stress and well-being’ have been generally used as indicators of resilience; however, it is recommended to also take into account the development of organizational resources, which can lead to increased resilience of employees within the organization, in order to also ensure their adaptability.

2. RESILIENCE AS A CONCEPT

Resilience is an important factor that can influence employees’ behavior, performance and output at work. Meredith *et al.* (2011) found that previous research has provided a range of definitions of resilience, but these definitions of resilience differ in the sense that some definitions focus on employees’ basic skills, while others focus on their ability to adapt to adverse events and changes. However, in general, definitions of this concept examine or refer to the ability of employees to manifest growth or change following a stressful or traumatic event (Atkinson, Martin and Rankin, 2009; Moldovan, 2019, pp. 388-400).

Resilience has been defined as a positive adaptive response to a stressful situation that could not have been foreseen (Rice and Overby, 2020), as an employee’s ability to adapt in the face of significant risk or adversity (Luthans, 2002, pp. 542-546), ‘the capability to use resources to continually adapt and flourish at work, even when

³ The current research is based on a previous work conducted by the authors in Romanian (see Cotoranu and Moldovan, 2020); in this version improvements have been made both regarding the theoretical and empirical analyses.

faced with challenging circumstances' (Plimmer *et al.*, 2022, p. 338), while other researchers believe that resilience can be understood as maintaining, recovering or improving mental and physical health in the face of challenges encountered in the workplace (Ryff and Singer, 2003, pp. 15-36). Following these definitions, we can state that an employee can have high level of resilience if he or she has traits such as physical health, mental well-being, energy and self-control.

On the other hand, Madewell and Ponce-Garcia (2016) view resilience as a class of phenomena characterized by positive adaptation in the context of significant adversity or risk (Madewell and Ponce-Garcia, 2016, pp. 249-255), while Prayag *et al.* (2020, pp. 1216-1233) see resilience as a function of an organization's overall situational awareness, management of key vulnerabilities, and adaptive capacity in a complex, dynamic, and interconnected environment. Luthans (2002, pp. 695-706) views resilience as the ability of employees, facilitated and supported by the organization, to use resources to adapt and develop continuously in the workplace even when faced with challenging or problematic circumstances; for more definitions and a more detailed analysis of how resilience has been understood and used in various fields in time, see Moldovan (2019, pp. 387-402).

Prayag *et al.* (2020) believe that employee resilience leads to a change in employee behavior and that a learning and cooperative work environment enables employees to develop higher levels of resilience in the face of stressors. To test this claim, a survey was administered to 363 employees in public organizations and institutions in New Zealand, in which participants were asked to rate how often they had been subjected to stressful situations at work. A Likert scale was used to measure the results, with response variables ranging from 1, meaning 'never', to 7, meaning 'almost always', and the survey concluded that 54.7% of employees were 'almost always' subjected to stressors, indicating that in some organizations the environment decreases resilience levels among employees, with a lack of cooperation and a lack of learning-oriented environment being key determinants (Prayag *et al.*, 2020).

In contrast to the personality-based approach, resilience can also be analyzed in terms of resilience trajectories. In other words, this approach involves using horizontal principles to analyze how employees adapt to adversity over time. Few studies have evaluated this approach, so there is not enough data to show the percentage of resilient employees in the face of risk factors that may affect their resilience. Galatzer-Levy *et al.* (2011) examined psychological stress among employees at a police academy and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder; this research was repeated at 6-, 12-, 24- and 36-months intervals, with only employees who had experienced at least one event that affected their level of resilience participating in the study. The conclusion of this study was that more than 80% of employees show a worryingly high degree of stress symptoms in their work (Galatzer-Levy *et al.*, 2011).

Bardoel *et al.* (2014, pp. 284-287) proposed several measures that can be taken to increase employee resilience referring to: developing social support programmes in the workplace; the implementation of work-life balance practices; employee assistance/help programmes; professional development and training programmes; flexible working arrangements, rewards and remuneration ('flexi-work'); the existence and development of occupational health and safety systems; risk and crisis management systems, and diversity management.

Resilience in the public organizations therefore largely describes the internal capacity of employees to work under pressure and to cope with any adversity, risk or crisis that may be encountered during their work. A significant focus on resilience indicates greater recognition of employees and developing and maintaining a high level of resilience should be a lifelong activity, as it is an indispensable part of a career.

3. RESILIENCE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The concept of resilience has rapidly gained influence and importance in public administration practice and research, as local and central governments have sought to improve their response to crisis situations to manage and respond effectively to them. Resilience is a crucial concept especially for public organizations that have to manage crises (Stark, 2014), whether they are natural disasters, economic, social or public health crises, or accidents affecting the community. Furthermore, according to Sagan *et al.* (2021) governance contributes to systems' resilience during crises as it influences multiple tertiary factors which, in turn, can improve the capacity of a system to be resilient. According to Bracci and Tallaki (2021, p. 346) management control systems can also increase adaptive behavior and foster organizational resilience in the public sector, both in sense of anticipatory capacity and coping capacity. Other authors (FitzGerald *et al.*, 2021; Elston and Bel, 2022) showed that partnerships and inter-municipal collaboration or 'waste and bricolage' (Van de Walle, 2014) can improve public service resilience.

The resilience of public sector employees can also reduce the effects of occupational stress and delay the onset of burnout (Hao *et al.*, 2015). In public administration, building resilience is seen as a practical and effective approach to overcome the dynamic, complex and uncertain conditions of an administrative system (Rush, Schoel and Barnard, 1995). Sarker *et al.* (2019) analyzed the factors that can increase the adaptive capacity of administrative systems to achieve resilience and a conceptual model based on an extensive literature review was developed to understand administrative resilience in terms of several indicators. The study showed that 'administrative resilience is the ability of the administrative system to provide adequate measures to uncertainties and to return to previous conditions after facing risks, shocks and disasters and other threats to organizational stability' (Sarker *et al.*, 2019). The same study supports the idea that administrative resilience is much better than conventional administrative approaches in terms of ensuring organizational flexibility, rapid response to uncertain conditions and rapid change, and socio-ecological system strengthening to combat vulnerability. Thus, the case study analysis confirms the conceptual model and reveals a great need for improvement of administrative resilience practices (Sarker *et al.*, 2019).

The resilience of public sector employees has been identified as the most widely used measure and the best approach to overcome administrative problems caused by uncertain and rapidly changing conditions. Thus, public sector employees can be considered to have a high level of resilience when they work in an organization where stability prevails and they are able to cope with any adversity that may occur in their organization. Meng *et al.* (2017) examined the relationships between resilience, burnout, commitment to the organization and the exchanges/interactions that occur between employees, teams and leaders, by focusing on a sample of 260 civil servants in China; results showed that resilience is positively correlated with employee-leader and employee-team interactions, as well as with employee commitment to the organization, but negatively correlated with burnout. Similar results have been obtained by other researchers, de Carvalho *et al.* (2011)⁴ showing that the level of resilience positively influences organizational socialization more than factors such as nationality or occupation.

Other authors (Qiu *et al.*, 2020) examined the link between resilience and personality in association with fatigue among local government civil servants in Japan. The employees were given a questionnaire in which they

⁴ The study was a comparative one, de Carvalho *et al.* (2011) applying questionnaires in two public universities in Brazil and Norway.

had to answer questions about workload level, fatigue, psychological stress and personality; the results showed that over 90% of employees suffered from fatigue and psychological stress at work, factors that were associated with their workload. High workload and low resilience were also found to have a large impact on perceived fatigue. Thus, workload and perceived fatigue can be considered as potential determinants of low resilience in the case of civil servants (Qiu *et al.*, 2020).

The leadership style adopted, as well as the general activity of the leader of a public organization are other factors that may influence the resilience of public servants (Nastacă, 2020; Franken, Plimmer and Malinen, 2020). The level of resilience of public sector employees may also be influenced by employees' perceptions of their own health and how they react to stress (Lee, Jeong and Choi, 2019). Fischer *et al.* (2022) argued that the public sector in Germany was resilient during the pandemic and adapted well to the work from home context and that leadership, autonomy, digital competencies and the available resources contribute to the individual resilience of civil servants. The role and impact of leadership on employee and organizational resilience in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic were also analyzed in the case of Romanian organizations by Țicău, Hințea and Trofin (2021).

More stressful situations and increases in the number of work-related demands are increasingly present in the public sector, and this can only point to several difficulties that public sector employees may face over time in the workplace. These difficulties include 'lack of professional administrative staff, ageing workforce, uncertain organizational changes, etc.' (Rolfe, 2019, pp. 15-40).

On the other hand, we must also consider the potential negative aspects of resilience, namely that the tendency or ability of officials and organizations to revert to their original state may degenerate, as an undesirable consequence, into their resistance to any attempt to reform or transform the administrative system (see Furukawa, 1999).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the present research we used a quantitative methodology to identify the level of resilience of rural civil servants and to identify measures (from the perspective of civil servants) that institutions should adopt to strengthen the resilience of employees.

The survey was administered to a convenience sample of rural public sector employees aged 18 and over, regardless of ethnicity, gender or career path. The questionnaire was administered online through a database containing the email addresses of rural municipalities in Romania. We selected 25 counties in Romania and from these 25 counties we then focused on local communities similar in terms of their level of economic development, degree of poverty, number of inhabitants, etc.

The questionnaire was electronically distributed to selected rural town hall employees in December 2019 and they were asked to complete the questionnaire by the end of January 2020; A total of 103 responses were obtained from 19 local communities in the 25 selected counties, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample and respondents

No.	City Hall	County	No. of respondents
1	Town hall Cosmești	Galați	5
2	Town hall Hărmănești	Iași	6
3	Town hall Ruginoasa	Iași	9
4	Town hall Holboaca	Iași	5
5	Town hall Vetrăoara	Vaslui	16
6	Town hall Bunesti	Brașov	6
7	Town hall Cristian	Brașov	4

8	Town hall Vâlcani	Timiș	5
9	Town hall Fibiș	Timiș	2
10	Town hall Ohaba-Lungă	Timiș	3
11	Town hall Teremia-Mare	Timiș	3
12	Town hall Batos	Mureș	3
13	Town hall Bogaciu	Mureș	6
14	Town hall Șeica Mică	Sibiu	5
15	Town hall Șura Mare	Sibiu	4
16	Town hall Șecăraia	Prahova	8
17	Town hall Frata	Cluj	5
18	Town hall Gârbău	Cluj	4
19	Town hall Ocoliș	Alba	4
Total			103

Sources: Authors' data

The questionnaire used for data collection (see Annex I) consists of:

- A battery of 21 items (statements/indicators) to measure the level of civil servants' resilience⁵;
- A question about perceived stress levels at work;
- A question about the level of self-confidence;
- A question about the methods used by each individual to manage stress;
- A question about the factors that influence how work is carried out;
- A question on how the organization helps employees overcome stressful situations that arise in the workplace; and
- Socio-demographic data: (a) total length of professional experience; (b) length of service (professional experience) in the public sector; (c) workload; (d) gender; (e) job title; (f) last school / educational level completed; and (g) age.

The convenience sample is made up of rural civil servants, 58.3% of whom are female and 41.7% of whom are male. 83.5% of the respondents hold executive positions and only 16.5% of the respondents hold managerial positions; regarding education, 45.6% of the respondents have a university degree, 32% have a master's degree, 14.6% have a high school degree and 6.8% have a short-term postgraduate degree, and a large proportion (34%) of the respondents have a high level of seniority in the public sector, between 11 and 15 years.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In order to identify the level of resilience of rural civil servants 21 statements have been derived from the literature to measure this phenomenon/concept. A Likert scale was used to measure the level of resilience with values between 1 (meaning 'totally disagree' with the statement) and 5 (meaning 'totally agree' with the statement); in essence, agreement or a high score/evaluation indicates an elevated level of resilience. A score of 81.5 was obtained out of 105 (the maximum possible) which indicates that there is a rather high level of resilience; the median is 81.00, the mode is 75.00 and the standard deviation is 9.24 (see Table 2).

Table 2: The resilience levels of rural civil servants

		Resilience Total
N	Valid	103
	Missing	0
	Mean	81.5049
	Median	81.0000

⁵ To measure the level of resilience, 21 items and a Likert scale with values between 1 (meaning strongly "disagree") and 5 (meaning "strongly agree") were used, so that a minimum score of 21 and a maximum score of 105 could be obtained.

Mode	75.00
Std. Deviation	9.24596

Source: Authors' data

The research results also show that the main factors affecting the level of resilience of rural civil servants are quite numerous, requiring the adoption of measures to strengthen resilience both at the individual level and by implementing measures at the organizational level. According to our respondents, the level of resilience of civil servants is affected by working conditions (24.3% agreed with the statement), civil servants considering that the small space in which they work and the presence of several people in the same office can affect resilience in a negative way. High workloads (40.8%), stress and working under pressure (48.5%), lack of flexibility (28.2%), lack of feedback, lack of experience, moving tasks from one person to another, verbal violence and lack of patience from citizens, and the small number of staff in the unit are also factors affecting resilience, in addition to the challenges and changes that public administration is continuously facing.

The research results also indicate the main measures adopted in the institutions analyzed in order to improve/strengthen resilience (see Table 3). Thus, the main measures adopted by institutions with the aim of strengthening the resilience of their employees refer to the efficient organization of work (35.9%), creation of optimal working conditions (31.1%), treating employees as equals (20.4%), encouraging employees (15.5%), concern for the well-being of citizens (13.6%), regular communication of progress (4.9%); there are however also institutions where no such method are currently used (14.6%).

Table 3: Main measures currently used by public institutions

Measures currently in place	Results
1. Encouraging employees	15.5%
2. Treating employees as equals	20.4%
3. Efficient organization of work	35.9%
4. Concern for employee welfare	13.6%
5. Creating optimal working conditions	31.1%
6. Giving feedback	8.7%
7. Regular reporting on progress	4.9%
8. None	14.6%

Sources: Authors' data

5.1. Hypothesis testing

5.1.1. The level of resilience and workload

This hypothesis was designed to examine whether the level of resilience could be influenced by workload, and the test found no significant differences in whether more or less workload could affect self-reported resilience. To test this hypothesis a comparison of means was used and the parametric t-test was calculated. The independent variable is workload, with two levels (1. high, 2. medium and low), and the dependent variable is resilience. The Levene's test had a statistically insignificant result ($p = .083$) so that the dispersions for the two groups are homogeneous. Therefore, the t-test had a statistically insignificant result, $t(101) = -1.593$, $p = .114$, so this hypothesis was not confirmed, indicating the absence of differences in resilience between high and low/medium workloads.

5.1.2. Level of resilience and age

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the relationship between age and resilience, as the independent variable (Age) is measured on a 5-level ordinal scale (18-25; 26-35; 36-45; 6-55; 56-65) and the dependent variable (resilience) is measured on an interval scale. Table 4 it can be seen how the factor Age has a p-value < .05, meaning that the level of resilience is not equally influenced by age.

Table 4: ANOVA (link between age and resilience)

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	846.595	4	211.649	2.634	.039
Within Groups	7873.153	98	80.338		
Total	8719.748	102			

Source: Authors' data

To further identify between which age categories significant differences are found, we applied Hochberg's GT2 post-hoc test. This option was chosen because the five groups have profoundly unequal sizes (as shown in Table 5) and because Levene's test was statistically insignificant ($p = .136$), indicating that the dispersions are equal.

Table 5: Age of respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Percent Valid	Cumulative percent
Valid	18-25 years	5	4.9	4.9
	26-35 years	30	29.1	34.0
	36-45 years	31	30.1	64.1
	46-55 years	29	28.2	92.2
	56-65 years	8	7.8	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors' data

The post-hoc test results indicate that those in the 18-25 age category have significantly lower resilience ($M = 71.20$) than those in the 56-65 age category ($M = 85.88$) at a $p < .05$. As shown in Figure 1, there were no significant differences between the other age categories.

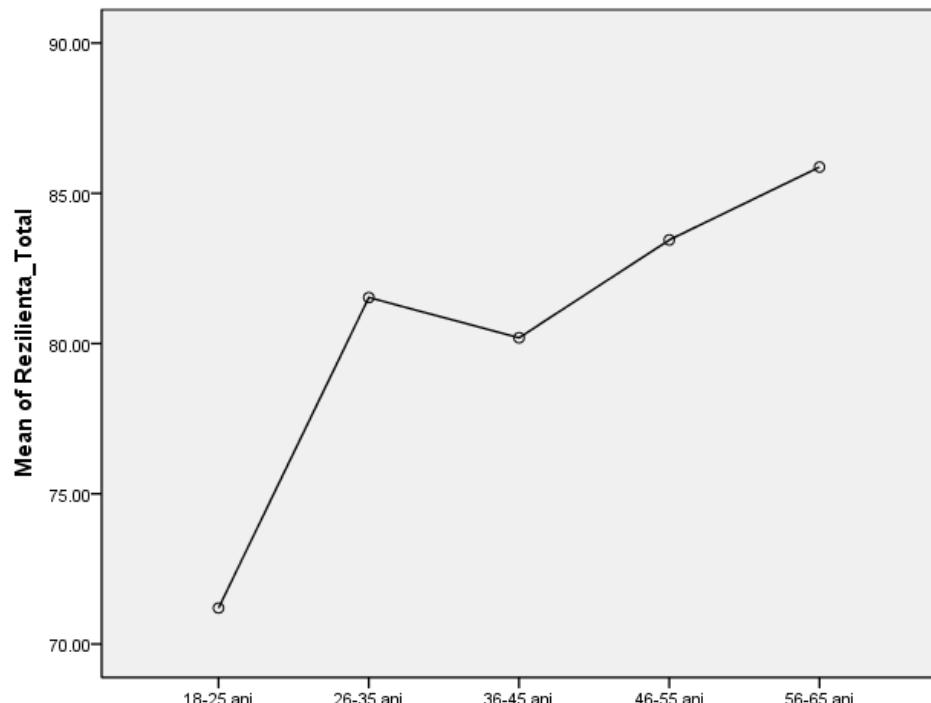


Figure 1: Resilience of respondents by age⁶

Source: Authors' data

5.1.3. The level of resilience and civil servant's length of service

For testing this hypothesis, the same analysis model was used as for the previous hypothesis, simple ANOVA, whereas the independent variable (seniority in the public sector) is measured on a 4 -level ordinal scale (0-3 years, 4-10 years, 11-15 years, 16+ years) and the dependent variable is resilience, measured on an interval scale. Table 6 shows that the factor Age has a p-value <.05, thus there are significant differences between groups.

Table 6: ANOVA (link between seniority in the public sector and resilience⁷)

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	813.538	3	271.179	3.396	.021
Within Groups	7906.209	99	79.861		
Total	8719.748	102			

Source: Authors' data

In order to identify between which categories of length of service (in the public sector) there are significant differences, Hochberg's post-hoc GT2 test was applied. This option was chosen because the four groups have unequal sizes (as can be seen in Table 7), and because Levene's test was statistically insignificant ($p = .502$), indicating that the dispersions are equal.

Table 7: Length of service in the public sector

	Frequency	Percent	Percent Valid	Cumulative percent
Valid	1 Between 0-3 years	25	24.3	24.3
	2 Between 4-10 years	25	24.3	48.5
	3 Between 11-15 years	35	34.0	82.5
	4 Over16 years	18	17.5	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors' data

The results of the post-hoc test indicate that those in the 0-3 years category have significantly lower resilience ($M = 79.20$) than those in the over 16 years old category ($M = 87.39$) at a $p < .05$. Otherwise, there were no significant differences between the other age categories (see Figure 2).

⁶ To measure the level of resilience, 21 items and a Likert scale with values between 1 (meaning strongly "disagree") and 5 (meaning "strongly agree") were used, so that a minimum score of 21 and a maximum score of 105 could be obtained.

⁷ To measure the level of resilience, 21 items and a Likert scale with values between 1 (meaning "strongly disagree") and 5 (meaning "strongly agree") were used, so that a minimum score of 21 and a maximum score of 105 could be obtained.

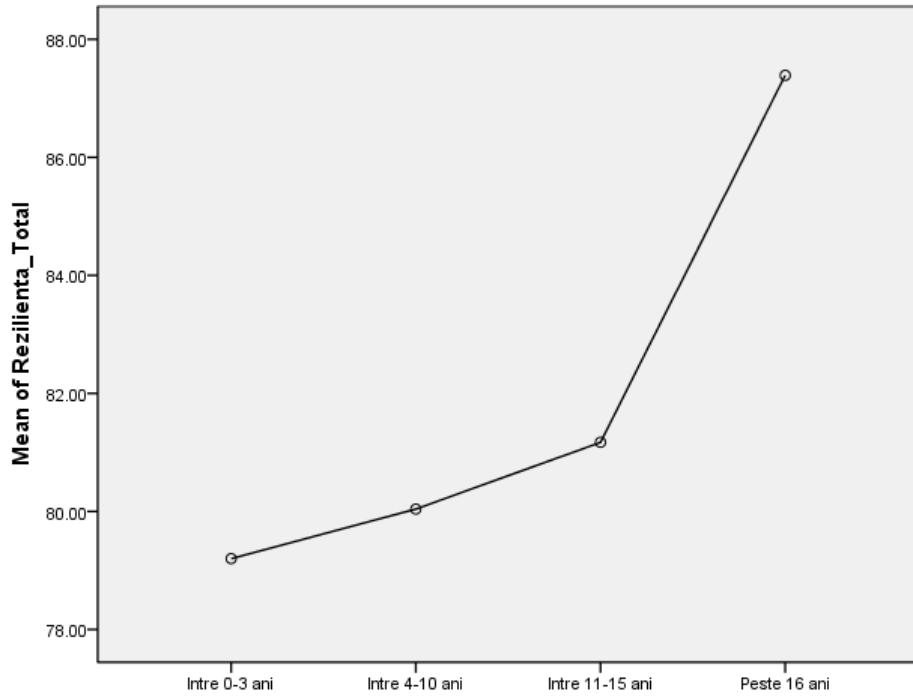


Figure 2: Resilience of respondents in public sector seniority⁸

Source: Authors' data

5.1.4. Other factors which can influence resilience

We also conducted a regression analysis in order to test if other factors such as the level of education, stress, self-confidence, gender, total work experience and their position/function (execution or decision-making) influence the level of personal resilience. According to Table 8, although R (the multiple correlation coefficient) indicates a rather medium to good level of prediction, R square (the coefficient of determination) and adjusted R square indicate that only a small fraction of the proportion of variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables – our model explains only 15.9% from the variance of individual resilience in the case of civil servants from the rural environment in Romania.

Table 8: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.457 ^a	.209	.159	8.51999

a. Predictors: (Constant), Education, Stress, Self-confidence, Gender, Work experience, Function

Source: Authors' data

Table 9 (ANOVA) shows that the overall regression model is a good fit for the data and that the independent variables statistically significantly predict resilience as $F(6, 95) = 4.182$ and $p < 0.001$.

Table 9: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1821.426	6	303.571	4.182	<.001 ^b
	Residual	6896.064	95	72.590		
	Total	8717.490	101			

a. Dependent Variable: Resilience Total

b. Predictors: (Constant), Education, Stress, Self-confidence, Gender, Work experience, Function

⁸ To measure the level of resilience, 21 items and a Likert scale with values between 1 (meaning strongly “disagree”) and 5 (meaning “strongly agree”) were used, so that a minimum score of 21 and a maximum score of 105 could be obtained.

Source: Authors' data

When taking into account individual variables, only the level of self-confidence⁹ reported by the respondents presents a statistically significant effect on resilience, with $\text{Sig.} < 0.001$; according to the scale used, the higher the level of self-confidence of civil servants, the higher their level of resilience. If we adopt a less strict level of statistical significance (< 0.1), total work experience also becomes a factor which influences the individual resilience level of civil servants from the rural environment, more work experience being associated to higher levels of resilience. Other variables included in the regression model, such as the level of education, stress, gender and their position/function (execution or decision-making), do not seem to affect resilience.

Table 10: Regression coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	94.815	9.478		10.003	<.001
Stress	-.186	.452	-.040	-.411	.682
Self-confidence	-3.729	1.041	-.350	-3.582	<.001***
Work experience	1.555	.917	.169	1.697	.093*
Gender	-2.018	1.776	-.107	-1.137	.259
Function	-1.840	2.732	-.074	-.674	.502
Education	-1.058	.863	-.127	-1.226	.223

Source: Authors' data

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main results of our research showed that the level of resilience can be influenced by two intertwined factors, namely seniority in the labor force/civil service and age (younger employees tend to have lower levels of resilience than older people), as well as the self-confidence of civil servants. Factors such as workload, stress at work, gender, function/position or the level of education do not seem to influence resilience.

Public sector employees were also asked about the main ways their organization uses to increase the level of resilience. The main methods currently used by public institutions in rural areas refer to the efficient organization of work, creation of optimal conditions for the completion of daily tasks, treating employees as equals, encouragement by management, regular communication of results. Based on these results, the following recommendations for improving the resilience of rural public sector employees can be made:

- Focus on young employees and those at the beginning of their career who might be less confident in their abilities;
- Delegate tasks to increase employee resilience;
- Create and maintain a positive relationship between employees (teams) and between employees and management;
- Apply mindfulness strategies;
- Develop skills to manage crisis situations in the workplace more effectively;
- Provide support for employees;
- Encouraging risk-taking; and
- Eliminate unnecessary tasks/reduce the number of tasks that have to be carried out on a daily basis.

⁹Self-confidence was measured on a Likert scale with values between 1 („very high level of self-confidence”) and 5 („Very low level of self-confidence”).

Profiroiu and Nastacă (2021) conducted a meta-analysis in order to develop a conceptual framework to understand the factors /drivers which can influence institutional resilience in the case of public administration. The model developed by the authors (Profiroiu and Nastacă, 2021, pp. 110-114) included 11 capacity factors of institutional resilience, as follows:

- 1. Innovation, knowledge, and creativity capacity;
- 2. Learning capacity;
- 3. Forecasting and strategic planning capacity;
- 4. Adaptative capacity (flexibility) and change management;
- 5. The capacity of using new technologies;
- 6. Stakeholders' involvement in the decision making process and in providing services;
- 7. Leadership and organizational management quality;
- 8. Transparency;
- 9. Human resources quality;
- 10. Networking and cooperation capacity;
- 11. Policies and strategies effectiveness;

By applying these recommendations, organizations can help increase the resilience of their employees. Having resilient employees in the public sector is essential because resilience determines employee output and performance.

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Annex I: Data collection tool

We are carrying out a research project in the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences (Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca) on the topic ‘Labour of public sector employees in rural areas’ and we would like to ask you to answer us to this questionnaire. The duration of the questionnaire is about 3-5 min. The answers are anonymous and will be used only for scientific research purposes. At the end of the research we can send you the results if you agree. Thank you.

1. To what extent do you agree with the statements below? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5 where: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1. When I am held accountable I feel that everything goes wrong					
2. Self-confidence helps me get through stressful times					
3. Whatever the situation, I always find solutions to cope					
4. Routine and rules make my job easier					
5. I am flexible, I adapt easily whatever the situation					
6. I would see the stressful situation as temporary					
7. I treat any work problem with positivity					
9. I can easily tolerate high-stress situations and work under pressure					
10. Perceive a change at work as an opportunity					
11. I find it quite difficult to adapt after changes					
12. Under stress I try different ways of working					
13. I am constantly learning from my experiences and those of others.					
14. I am very resilient. I move forward no matter what					
15. Difficult and stressful situations have made me become even better at work					
16. Work under constant pressure makes me anxious, depressed					
17. I lose my temper when I get bad news at work					
18. Receiving negative feedback from the boss would make me quit					
19. In a difficult situation I encourage myself					
20. When dealing with adversity at work, I work effectively with colleagues to cope					
21. When I have problems at work I find encouragement in my family.					

2. On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 is ‘very low’ and 10 is ‘very high’), the level of perceived stress at work is:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Level of self-confidence is:

- 1. Very high
- 2. High
- 3. Neither high nor low
- 4. Low
- 5. Very low

4. What are the main stress management methods you use?

- 1. Relaxation techniques
- 2. Adopting a healthy lifestyle
- 3. Self-confidence
- 4. Positive thinking
- 5. Adapting to the situation
- 6. Other (please specify) _____.

5. In your opinion, what are the factors that affect the smooth running of employees’ work?

- 1. Working conditions
- 2. High level of workload
- 3. Stress and working under pressure
- 4. Lack of flexibility
- 5. Lack of feedback
- 6. Other (please specify).....

6. What are the main sources that the organisation uses for employees to overcome stressful workplace situations:

1. Encouraging employees
2. Treating employees as equals
3. Organising work efficiently
4. Concern for employee welfare
5. Creating optimal working conditions
6. Giving feedback
7. Regular communication of progress
8. None

7. Your professional experience (number of years in which you have been employed) is:

1. between 0 - 3 years
2. between 4 - 10 years
3. between 11 - 20 years
4. More than 20 years

8. Your length of service (professional experience) in the public sector/public administration is:

1. between 0 - 3 years
2. between 4 - 10 years
3. between 11 - 15 years
4. More than 16 years

9. Your volume of work (workload) is:

1. Very low
2. Low
3. Neither low nor high
4. High
5. Very high

10. Your gender:

1. Female
2. Male

11. Your function/position is:

1. Management position
2. Executive function

12. Last school (educational level) completed:

1. High school
2. University studies
3. Postgraduate studies (short-term)
4. Master
5. Doctorate/PhD

13. Your age:

1. 18-25 years old
2. 26-35 years old
3. 36-45 years old
4. 46-55 years old
5. 56-65 years old