

# **Defining a Research Model of Leader Resilience and Evaluating the Dispositional Effect of Resilience on Transformational Leadership**

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## **Abstract**

During the last ten years, research linking the constructs of resilience and leadership style has begun to emerge, with a small number of research papers investigating a combination of these factors (Garbowski, 2010; Offutt, 2011; Sylvester, 2009; Wasden, 2014). This thesis extends the current research in the field by proposing and validating a model of leader resilience that has been developed to align with leadership in an organisational context. The thesis also explores and defines the relationship between resilience and transformational leadership, providing essential insights into the impact of resilience training on leadership capability.

A multidisciplinary review of the extant research on the constructs of leadership style and resilience was conducted. The relationship between these research areas was explored and hypothesised links in previous research from a range of disciplines were investigated. Based on this multidisciplinary review, a model of leader resilience was developed, and three dimensions of resilience were proposed.

The dimensions identified aligned with an organisational and leadership context and included self-concept well-being, locus of control and constructive thinking. Each of these dimensions has been independently shown to enhance a leader's ability to bounce back and remain optimistic, as well as ensuring that the individual can consistently deliver a transformational leadership style.

This organisational model of leader resilience informed the design of two field-based studies devised to add to the research linking these constructs. Study 1 was designed to investigate the relationships between resilience and the transformational leadership style and to validate the proposed model of leader resilience. These relationships were examined using a field-based non-experimental design with a sample of 110 leaders. The participants were leaders from a range of private and publicsector organisations across Western Australia. The results of Study 1 showed statistical support for the three-factor model of leader resilience proposed in previous studies. The structural equation modelling (SEM) of the relationships confirmed the proposed model of leader resilience with its dimensions—self-concept well-being, internal locus of control and constructive thinking. SEM also validated the proposed relationships between leader resilience and leadership style, confirming that leader resilience significantly predicted a transformational style and did not significantly predict a transactional style of leadership.

Study 2 examined two key aspects: First, whether leader resilience could be enhanced using a developmental intervention designed to build the three dimensions of resilience; and second, whether improving leader resilience could have a positive impact on an individual's leadership style. The studies reported in Study 2 utilised a before-and-after quasi-experimental design with quantitative data analysis, based on a sample of 27 leaders from two organisations based in Perth. The results showed a significant and positive shift in the self-assessed scores across the three dimensions and the measure of resilience. Statistical analysis also confirmed a significant and positive shift in participants' levels of transformational leadership as measured by self-assessed and bossassessed scores. The results of both Study 1 and 2 confirmed the hypothesised relationships.

**Keywords:** Leadership and Resilience