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Design and Validation of a Servant Leadership Model with an Organizational Resilience Approach in the General Directorate of Education of Khorasan Razavi Province

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The primary aim of this research was to conceptualize and empirically validate a servant leadership framework through the lens of organizational resilience within the General Directorate of Education in Khorasan Razavi Province.

Methods: The research methodology employed in this study is of a mixed-methods nature. The qualitative segment of the statistical population comprises managers and deputies from the General Directorate of Education in the province, as well as university academics and domain experts (15 individuals). In the quantitative segment encompassed all personnel affiliated with the General Directorate of Education of Khorasan Razavi (350 individuals). A statistical sample of 186 individuals was determined using the Morgan table, and in response to the anticipated dropout rate, 220 questionnaires were disseminated among the statistical sample. Data analysis and model fit assessment involved the application of structural equation modeling techniques.

Results: An examination of both servant leadership and organizational resilience variables, inclusive of their respective dimensions and components, indicated a confirmed interrelationship among these variables; specifically, it was established that organizational resilience exerts a positive influence on servant leadership, while situational awareness, vulnerability, and adaptability significantly affect organizational resilience, thereby demonstrating that the proposed model exhibits a commendable fit.

Conclusions: It can be conclusively articulated that the integration of servant leadership dimensions within an organizational resilience framework has the potential to facilitate the attainment of educational objectives, and thus, the implementation of the current research model within the educational framework is strongly advocated.

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Introduction

The designation "servant leader" denotes a paradigm of servant leadership characterized by an intrinsic sense of humility. Servant leadership is fundamentally rooted in ethical precepts. Internal ethical frameworks direct leaders in elucidating the significance of ethics for their followers (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005). The progressive implementation of servant leadership enhances organizational performance through the cultivation of a robust trust dynamic between the leader and their followers (Sihombing et al., 2018). Servant leadership constitutes a leadership methodology that embodies a profound commitment to serving one's subordinates. An increasing number of organizations are actively pursuing leaders whose motivations are aligned with serving individuals, while concurrently seeking reliable methodologies to identify and anticipate servant leaders who exhibit the attributes characteristic of a servant leader in their managerial milieu (Hunter et al., 2013; Neubert et al., 2016). In light of the expanding international experiences and the globalization of markets, the amalgamation of the global economy, fierce competition, uncertainty, and the volatility of the global landscape has engendered new prerequisites for nations aspiring to thrive and compete within the intricate and unpredictable terrain of the global economy; Hence, both public and private entities must endeavor to cultivate resilience in the face of crises (Williams et al., 2017). Resilience is defined as the capacity of an organization to endure, manage, and recuperate from a catastrophic incident or a crisis or challenging circumstance (Aleksić et al., 2013).

Scholars contend that a resilient organization is one that adapts to environmental exigencies to ensure its survival (organizational adaptation), operates efficiently and effectively in delivering services (organizational competitiveness), and possesses a distinguished reputation (organizational value) (Azusa & Hiroyuki, 2013). Resilience embodies the capacity of societies, as well as physical, social, political, and economic systems, their infrastructures, and their environments to withstand and endure the threats posed by various stresses and strains, to recover promptly, to embrace prospective challenges, and to confront them (Burnard et al., 2018); Furthermore, resilience can be articulated as the capability of an organization to manage disturbances in order to preserve its existing configuration or to formulate a new organizational structure that is better aligned with emergent environmental conditions (Caralli et al., 2010).

In recent decades, the servant leadership paradigm has garnered significant attention from researchers. Conventional leadership theories were predicated on a hierarchical framework wherein authority was concentrated at the apex of the organizational hierarchy, with directives disseminated from the top

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down, necessitating compliance from subordinates at lower echelons as a condition of organizational membership (Duren, 2017; Sarvi et al., 2024). The evolving work environment has stimulated numerous researchers to reassess traditional leadership theories and to propose frameworks that are congruent with contemporary circumstances. The notion of servant leadership has attained substantial prominence in the contemporary era, while transformational leadership has been employed by organizations over an extended period (Eaton, 2020; Parris & Peachey, 2013). Although these two paradigms may share certain similarities, they embody fundamental distinctions that warrant thorough examination and differentiation. A considerable number of researchers have engaged in investigations pertaining to ethical leadership and have conducted comparative analyses with other leadership paradigms such as spiritual leadership, transformational leadership, and trustworthy leadership (Ingram, 2016).

Organizations across all sectors encounter multifaceted operational landscapes characterized by dynamic risks. These intricate environments compel organizations to contemplate strategies for managing operational risk as well as enhancing the resilience of essential business and service processes. Organizations are incessantly confronted with circumstances and events that introduce stress and ambiguity, potentially disrupting the operational continuity of the organization. Empirical research has indicated that the capacity of societal organizations to effectively manage crises and challenges significantly influences the society's overall resilience in confronting crises and the quality of recovery from adversities (Barasa et al., 2018). Organizations fulfill a pivotal role in facilitating the expeditious return of society to a state of normalcy by delivering essential services during periods of crisis. Consequently, organizational resilience, defined as the ability of an organization to anticipate crises, mitigate their impacts, endure the consequent damage, respond appropriately, and ultimately recuperate from such crises, has emerged as a salient topic in organizational research (Duchek, 2020). Resilience, conceptualized as the capability of an organization to confront and navigate crises and challenges while reverting to standard operational conditions, is an indispensable attribute that organizations must cultivate for their survival and continuity (Manfield & Newey, 2018). Nevertheless, the scope of concern extends beyond catastrophic events; it encompasses minor deviations and uncertainties that pose challenges to organizations (Hillmann & Guenther, 2021). Organizations are integral components of society, with a significant portion of societal daily operations reliant upon their functionality. Therefore, to ensure organizational survival and to mitigate the disruptions engendered by crises within the current social continuum, resilience is imperative for organizations (Hillmann &

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Guenther, 2021). Resilience is articulated as the extent of damage and loss that a system can endure without deviating from equilibrium; it is regarded as a construct across various economic, social, environmental, physical, and institutional dimensions (Hillmann & Guenther, 2021).

Given the dynamic nature of responses to hazards, resilience embodies a form of foresight that enhances decision-making alternatives in the face of uncertainty and transformation. Consequently, due to the inherent challenges in entirely predicting vulnerabilities, resilience can be conceptualized as the capacity of systems to adapt to alterations induced by disasters without succumbing to failure or collapse, representing a subject amenable to examination through foresight methodologies ((Burnard et al., 2018).

A critical responsibility of organizational leaders is to inspire employees, elevate morale, and cultivate a constructive attitude among the workforce. Leadership encompasses a variety of styles that leaders can implement within the organization, contingent upon the specific operational contexts relevant to each style (Schmid, 2006). In contemporary settings, effective leadership is recognized as a fundamental principle for achieving organizational success. Modern organizations attribute greater significance to the enhancement of leadership capabilities than in previous eras. Scholars have proposed various leadership styles, among which servant leadership has gained notable prominence in recent years (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012). This scholarly perspective elucidates the intricate relationship between leaders and their followers through the lens of service provision, continuous improvement, and empowerment. At the core of servant leadership lies the principle of service. A servant leader is required to embody a particular set of mindsets that prioritize the intrinsic value of individuals and demonstrate acute attention to their needs (Neubert et al., 2016). The servant leadership paradigm is essential for addressing the challenges posed by the inherent diversity among leaders (Duren, 2017). The imperative to prioritize the public interest within the realm of public administration necessitates that public managers cultivate a public orientation in their everyday processes and conduct. The ongoing decline in public trust, coupled with the necessity for equitable power distribution and empowerment in nations navigating the democratization process, underscores the critical relevance of servant leadership. Furthermore, the evolving concept of modern public services, which has garnered increased attention in recent years, amplifies the demand for the servant leadership model (Trastek et al., 2014). A defining characteristic of contemporary times is the emergence of new discourses across various scientific disciplines, which catalyze innovations that fundamentally alter human existence. Leadership, as a scientific domain, has not been exempt from these advancements and transformations,

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resulting in the introduction of new theories and discussions. Despite the extensive array of studies conducted in the realm of organizational leadership and resilience across diverse sectors, there exists a notable gap in research that integrates the construct of servant leadership with an organizational resilience framework within the educational context. Consequently, the relationships articulated within international scientific discourse remain ambiguous and lack clarity. Moreover, organizations inherently constitute a segment of society, bearing the weight of numerous quotidian operations. The delineation of a specific statistical population for this study serves as an additional impetus for undertaking this research endeavor. In the current landscape, executives and educational personnel are grappling with heightened work pressures emanating from the COVID-19 pandemic, alongside uncertainties regarding the reopening of educational institutions and projections related to the disease trajectory. Thus, there is an urgent need to enhance organizational capabilities aimed at fostering adaptability, resilience, and effective management of critical vulnerabilities within the workplace.

Consequently, the sustenance of organizations and the mitigation of disruptions engendered by social challenges render resilience an indispensable attribute for organizations. In light of these considerations, the urgency and significance of conducting this research are more pronounced than ever. Given the aforementioned considerations, the significance and imperative nature of undertaking research has become increasingly pronounced. Furthermore, the introduction of this model may elucidate the current standing of the servant leadership paradigm among the managerial cadre of the General Directorate of Education of Khorasan Razavi within the context of organizational resilience, thereby facilitating the establishment of a definitive trajectory toward the attainment of international benchmarks; additionally, the insights derived from this endeavor may be presented as a strategic framework to the policymakers within the national educational framework. Consequently, this study aims to conceptualize and authenticate a servant leadership framework that integrates an organizational resilience perspective in the General Directorate of Education of Khorasan Razavi Province.

Material and Methods

Given that the objective of the present research was to formulate and authenticate a servant leadership model through an organizational resilience framework within the General Directorate of Education of Khorasan Razavi Province, the researcher, while examining theoretical foundations to construct the conceptual model, identified the dimensions and components pertinent to both servant leadership and organizational resilience. Subsequently, employing a qualitative methodology alongside the Delphi

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research technique, these identified factors were presented to a panel of experts, who were requested to ascertain the most salient factors while dismissing those deemed less significant or irrelevant; they were also encouraged to identify additional pertinent factors that were not included in the model, if feasible. Following this, the initial questionnaire was formulated based on these insights, and the modified questionnaire was subsequently distributed to the experts, culminating in the identification of the most critical dimensions and components associated with servant leadership and organizational resilience. Ultimately, the questionnaire, which was developed utilizing the Delphi design, was assessed among members of the statistical community, thereby concluding the quantitative approach.

Since any research endeavor can be scrutinized through three lenses: outcomes, objectives, and data types, it follows that various configurations of outcomes, objectives, and data types are conceivable; consequently, this research is categorized as applied concerning its outcomes, as it aimed to advance a servant leadership model with an organizational resilience perspective. In relation to its objectives, this research was classified as descriptive, thereby establishing our qualitative research strategy as field-based. The methodology employed in this research was of a mixed nature.

The statistical population for the qualitative segment comprised scholarly experts, as well as executive professionals including managers and deputies from the provincial Directorate of Education, university academics, and specialists in the pertinent field, totaling 15 individuals. Given the qualitative essence of the initial segment of the study, purposive sampling was implemented; experts were selected based on specific criteria such as their expertise in executive matters, relevant teaching experience, and possession of credible publications and scholarly works.

The statistical population for the quantitative segment encompassed all personnel associated with the General Directorate of Education of Khorasan Razavi, which consisted of 350 individuals within the general department. According to the Morgan table, the statistical sample was determined to be 186 individuals, and in consideration of potential subject attrition, 220 questionnaires were disseminated among the statistical sample. Considering the breadth of the statistical population, a simple random sampling method was employed for selecting the sample. Accordingly, given the total number of the statistical population in the general department, the sample was chosen such that 220 questionnaires were distributed randomly throughout the general department and selected as the sample. For qualitative data analysis, the Delphi questionnaire was utilized to extract components and dimensions, while structural equation modeling was employed for inferential analysis to evaluate the model's fit. For data analysis, SPSS version 24 and PLS software were utilized.

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Results

In the initial phase of the Delphi project, a comprehensive questionnaire encompassing dimensions, components, and indicators suggested by the researcher for the assessment of the organizational capabilities' enhancement model utilizing an organizational learning framework was disseminated to the panel of experts to solicit their evaluations regarding the significance of the aforementioned elements. The participants of the expert panel were requested to express their levels of agreement or disagreement with the items delineated in the research framework. Consequently, those dimensions that received a favorable score exceeding 0.7 were retained for further analysis and incorporated into the subsequent phase of the Delphi investigation. In the second phase of the study, the relevant items were derived from a thorough examination of existing literature. Following the identification of the most critical dimensions necessary for model development from the experts' perspectives, the objective of the second phase of the Delphi project was to scrutinize the proposed dimensions and components associated with each research variable and to articulate and explicate the requisite dimensions grounded in the insights and perspectives of the responding experts. During this phase, a questionnaire utilizing a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strong agreement to strong disagreement was employed. In this investigation, content validity was utilized to assess the validity, and to evaluate the content validity of the questionnaire, it was distributed among 15 specialists. To ascertain the content validity ratio, the questionnaire was segmented into a designated section concerning content validity, where experts and informants assigned scores to the identified components according to a three-point Likert scale (essential - beneficial yet unnecessary - not necessary). According to Table 1, the Cronbach's alpha, content validity ratio, and content validity index all exceed 0.7, thereby indicating the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. Following the exclusion of the rejected items, 91 questions were validated, and the questionnaire was meticulously constructed and prepared for the quantitative segment, subsequently duplicated, completed, collected, and subjected to analysis by the statistical population.

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Table 1. Content validity of Delphi codes of the third stage based on criteria

Dimensions		Components	N of Items	Cronbach s alpha'	CVR	CVI
Dimensions and components	Situational awareness	Roles and responsibilities	3	0.718	0.877	0.914
		Understanding and analyzing risks and their consequences	4	0.784	0.769	0.919
		Amount of communication and calls	3	0.812	0.794	0.978
		Insurance awareness and situational awareness	2	0.794	0.799	0.926
		Priorities for returning to normal	3	0.754	0.784	0.914
		Monitoring and reporting on internal and external status	3	0.769	0.815	0.897
		Informed decision-making	2	0.794	0.799	0.932
	Key vulnerabilities	Planning strategies	6	0.806	0.746	0.908
		Participate in exercises and maneuvers	3	0.795	0.798	0.944
		The organization's internal capabilities and capacities	3	0.798	0.798	0.918
		Organizational Communications	3	0.982	0.758	0.906
		Robust processes for identifying and analyzing vulnerabilities	3	0.794	0.765	0.926
		Participation and presence in the organization	3	0.874	0.748	0.914
	Adaptability capacity	Silo mentality	3	0.769	0.733	0.897
		Communications and relationships	3	0.814	0.748	0.932
		Strategic and forward-looking approach	3	0.795	0.777	0.966
		Information and awareness	6	0.739	0.759	0.897
		Leadership, management and structure Administration	5	0.706	0.748	0.944
		Creativity and innovation	3	0.795	0.798	0.902
		Advanced and responsible decision-making	3	0.788	0.897	0.897
	Servant Leadership	Social love	6	0.794	0.798	0.947
		Altruism	6	0.807	0.748	0.911
		Insight	6	0.706	0.794	0.941
		Empowerment	6	0.748	0.768	0.946

To examine the relationship between variables, the Pearson correlation test (parametric correlation method) is used. In Table 2, the Pearson method was used to examine the relationship between variables. Considering the significance level which is less than 0.05 in all relationships, it is confirmed that the relationship between the variables is significant.

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Table 2. Matrix of correlation coefficients between the main variables of the study

Research variables		Organizational resilience	Situationalism	Vulnerability	Adaptability
Servant Leadership	Correlation	0.436**	0.416*	0.484*	0.555**
	P	0.001	0.01	0.001	0.001

The findings of the KMO test alongside Bartlett's sphericity test are illustrated in Table 3. As demonstrated in Table 3, the KMO index was determined to be 0.744, exceeding the threshold of 0.7, and the Bartlett's test statistic exhibits a significance level surpassing 0.7, thereby affirming the adequacy of the sampling process and confirming the appropriateness of the correlation matrix for conducting factor analysis on the data.

Table 3. Findings of the KMO and Bartlett's sphericity test

Indices	KMO test	Bartlett's sphericity test	DF	p
Resilience	0.720	6504.581	2211	0.001
Leadership	0.750	1168.554	0.276	0.001

The analysis revealed that all factor loadings presented exceed the minimum criterion of 0.4, and the T values are above 1.96, signifying their commendable reliability. The factor loadings and T values among the components are delineated in accordance with Table 4.

Table 4. Factor loading and T value

Relationship	Factor loading	T value
Servant leadership to Organizational resilience	0.888	12.732
Situational analysis to Organizational resilience	0.523	12.689
Organizational resilience to Vulnerability	0.501	12.903
Organizational resilience to Adaptability	0.433	11.461

To assess the internal consistency of the measurement model utilizing the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method, the composite reliability criterion (CR) is employed. A CR value that surpasses 0.7 signifies an adequate level of internal stability within the measurement model. The findings delineated in Table 5 illustrate that the composite reliability coefficients of the variables are at a commendable level.

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Table 5. Composite reliability coefficient

Relationship	CR
Servant leadership to Organizational resilience	0.915
Situational analysis toOrganizational resilience	0.942
Organizational resilience to Vulnerability	0.949
Organizational resilience to Adaptability	0.952

The average variance extracted (AVE) criterion was introduced by Fornell and Larcker (1981) as a metric for evaluating the internal validity of the measurement model. In more accessible terms, this index reflects the extent of correlation between a construct and its associated indicators. A minimum threshold of 0.5 is established for this index, and the results presented in Table 6 indicate that the interrelationship among the variables achieves the requisite level of convergent validity.

Table 6. Results of examining convergent validity with the AVE criterion

Relationship	**AVE**	**Root**
Servant leadership to Organizational resilience	0.900	0.948
Situational analysis toOrganizational resilience	0.875	0.935
Organizational resilience to Vulnerability	0.980	0.989
Organizational resilience to Adaptability	0.952	0.975

According to the data in Table 7, the Q^2 value for all examined relationships exceeds 0.03. The SRMR value, recorded at 0.051, must be less than 0.08, a criterion that is fulfilled. Furthermore, the NFI value of 0.945, which should approach one, is also deemed acceptable. The GOF (Goodness of Fit) value serves as an indicator of the overall efficacy of the model. This index is manually computed as the mean R^2 alongside the average of the common values. The GOF index varies between zero and one, categorized into three distinct values: 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36, representing weak, medium, and strong values, respectively. The mean of the common values for this model is 0.962, while the average R^2 is 0.375, culminating in a GOF index of 0.361, which signifies a robust and favorable overall value of the model.

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Table 7. Overall Fit of the Relationship

Relationship	Q^2	R^2
Servant leadership to Organizational resilience	0.155	0.888
Situational analysis toOrganizational resilience	0.069	0.0006
Organizational resilience to Vulnerability	0.173	0.788
Organizational resilience to Adaptability	0.082	0.904

SRMR= 0.051, Chi-Square = 1542.625, NFI = 0.945, GOF= 0.361

An additional evaluation mechanism for the reflective measurement model is the quality check test, which assesses common validity. A positive SSE/SSO-1 value indicates that the quality of the measurement instrument is satisfactory. This index effectively measures the capacity of the path model to predict the observable variables of the items via their corresponding latent variables (components). As evidenced by the algorithmic output in Table 8, the correlation between organizational resilience and servant leadership displays positive values that are significantly acceptable (good fit).

Table 8. Output of the test of the quality of the measurement and structural model

Relationship	SSO	SSE	1-SSE/SSO
Servant leadership to Organizational resilience	4992.00	4215.15	0.155
Situational analysis toOrganizational resilience	3456.00	3115.47	0.069
Organizational resilience to Vulnerability	1920.00	1587.16	0.173
Organizational resilience to Adaptability	6912.00	6345.15	0.082

Discussion

The findings of the research indicated that specific indicators, components, and dimensions were discerned that play a pivotal role in elucidating each of the primary variables. Subsequent to the validation of the suitability of each model, the ultimate research framework, encompassing both servant leadership and organizational resilience variables along with their respective dimensions and components, demonstrated that the interrelationship among the variables was substantiated, such that organizational resilience positively influences servant leadership, whereas situational awareness, as well as vulnerability and adaptability, significantly impact organizational resilience; moreover, the proposed model exhibited a commendable fit. In layman's terms, general resilience refers to the capacity to navigate through challenging circumstances that individuals may confront. According to this definition, resilience is an attribute that appears to be inherently possessed by nearly all humans, suggesting an innate characteristic of the human species. Individuals who have

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experienced a nurturing childhood are often able to confront numerous challenges and adversities that emerge, even when some of these challenges may appear insurmountable without exaggeration. Naturally, there exist exceptions, including those who require guidance, management, and support; however, the majority of individuals exhibit a resilient mindset; we collectively experience love, navigate life, engage in work, endure profound pain and sorrow, and ultimately recover (Barasa et al., 2018). Resilience has the potential to facilitate positive adaptation by enhancing the sense of self-worth as a mediating factor; consequently, psychological vulnerability, along with depression and anxiety, are often the ramifications of inadequate resilience. Furthermore, it can be asserted that individuals with elevated resilience levels tend to possess a heightened sense of hope when confronted with challenges and employ effective coping strategies, rendering them less susceptible to social issues (Manfield & Newey, 2018).

Servant organizations necessitate distinct methodologies and objectives in comparison to transformational and traditional organizations. Servant leadership, in essence, constitutes a cohesive approach to attracting individuals to the organization. The primary obligation of leaders is to ensure the achievement of organizational objectives (Hunter et al., 2013). These leaders are tasked with executing innovative actions, identifying deficiencies, and overseeing processes. Managers within governmental and commercial entities adhere to established policies. Consequently, only political and religious leaders possess designated managers or subordinates. Managers, by leveraging their subordinates and employees, facilitate the pathway to organizational success. Individuals recruited by commercial enterprises or engaged in public sector organizations do not necessarily align with the relevant organizational objectives. Management and leadership are fundamental cornerstones of any organization and society. The imperative for management and leadership across all domains of social engagement is both palpable and essential. This necessity becomes particularly pronounced within educational systems, as education serves a crucial role in the functioning, continuity, and survival of society, necessitating effective leadership and management for the development and execution of impactful and high-quality educational and training initiatives.

Resilience within society constitutes a pivotal element in mitigating the impact of casualties resulting from natural disasters; however, in numerous instances, the failure of one or multiple sectors within a network undermines the overall efficacy of that network, consequently leading to

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considerable losses. Conversely, findings from Iran have demonstrated that insufficient emphasis on the resilience concept disrupts the fundamental components of the service delivery chain, encompassing employee attendance, appropriateness, infrastructure safety, incident management, support systems, capacity, and external factors. Scholars assert that a resilient organization is characterized by its capacity to respond to environmental demands to ensure its survival (organizational adaptation), demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness in service transfer and delivery (organizational competitiveness), and attain recognition (organizational value) (Williams et al., 2017). Resilience is defined as the capacity of societies, along with their physical, social, political, and economic systems, and their edifices and settlements, to endure risks stemming from stresses and pressures, thereby facilitating a rapid recovery, the acceptance of future threats, and the confrontation of such challenges (Caralli et al., 2010); furthermore, it can also be articulated that resilience encompasses the ability of an organization to confront disturbances in order to preserve its existing configuration or to establish a new organizational configuration that is more aptly suited to emerging environmental conditions. Educational management transcends the mere execution of administrative duties or the implementation of organizational approvals, directives, and instructions.

Instead, the adoption of targeted methodologies that align with the educational context can facilitate not only a management function but also a leadership role. Within an educational institution, resilience bestows upon the organization the capability to empower employees in navigating the challenges they encounter, surmounting adversity, and sustaining their professional trajectories. Social support represents another critical variable that bolsters resilience. Individuals with strong mental fortitude typically seek the backing of family, friends, and colleagues, which aids them in effectively managing challenges when confronted with dilemmas.

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Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by ethics committee of Islamic Azad University.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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