

Strategies for Handling Workplace Adversity: Problem-Focused and Emotion-Focused Behaviours

Živilė Stankevičiūtė

Kaunas University of Technology, School of Economics and Business, Lithuania
zivile.stankeviciute@ktu.lt

Eglė Staniškienė

Kaunas University of Technology, School of Economics and Business, Lithuania
egle.staniskiene@ktu.lt

Asta Daunorienė

Kaunas University of Technology, School of Economics and Business, Lithuania
asta.daunoriene@ktu.lt

Joana Ramanauskaitė

Kaunas University of Technology, School of Economics and Business, Lithuania
joana.ramanauskaite@ktu.lt

Abstract

Due to technological, geopolitical, political, and environmental challenges, the work environment is undergoing constant change. As a result, employees need to handle various setbacks at work by demonstrating resilience, which refers to an employee's capacity to rebound from adversity and to use organizational resources to ensure ongoing development and growth. Treating resilience as a process, the core element is coping, which implies a broad array of responses to distress resulting from negative experiences. Previous literature indicates two main types of coping behaviours, namely problem-focused behaviours and emotion-focused behaviours. However, little is known about how these behaviours are demonstrated in real settings. The current paper aims to address this gap. Specifically, it seeks to identify particular types of problem-focused and emotion-focused behaviours used when coping with adversity at work. To achieve this, a qualitative study was conducted, including 36 interviews with 21 employees and 15 human resource managers. The results revealed that, within the cluster of problem-focused behaviours, active coping was predominant. Active coping involves efforts to change or remove stressors. Meanwhile, within emotion-focused behaviours, venting, rumination, and self-blaming were predominant. Venting mainly included getting angry, crying, or acting out. Rumination involved repeatedly thinking about adversity, while self-blaming referred to a self-critical and self-denigrating way of thinking. In summary, although both coping strategies were identified, problem-focused behaviours are more aligned with human

sustainability and well-being at work. As such, organizations are encouraged to provide training on how to cope effectively with difficult situations at work.

Keywords: employee resilience, coping strategies, problem-focused behaviours, emotion-focused behaviours, adversity at work, self-blaming, venting.

Acknowledgements: This research project has received funding from the Research Council of Lithuania (LMTLT), agreement No [S-MIP-23-55].