Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
Resilience training in a restructuring organization

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology

Massey University, Albany
New Zealand

Heather Leanore Bullen

2006
Abstract

The aim of the present research was to investigate the extent to which resilience training helped to minimize employee stress levels and improve wellbeing during a time of organizational change. The 33 employees involved in this study consisted of three groups. Group 1 received resilience training in 2002 and 2003; Group 2 received resilience training in 2003; and Group 3, the control group, received no resilience training during this study.

A baseline measure of stress and wellbeing was collected for all groups before the start of the 2003 resilience training (Time 1, April) and repeated after the resilience training (Time 3, November). Data was also collected on the resilience variables of curiosity and coping at Time 2 (August) and repeated at post training (Time 3, November). The 2003 restructuring was consistent for all groups at Time 1 (April) but subsequent changes during the year impacted more heavily on the resilience trained groups.

The results showed that group 1 (Trained in 2002) reported significantly less somatic distress than the other two groups at baseline (Time 1). While none of the hypothesized differences were found at Time 3, the resilience trained groups showed low stress levels and good wellbeing levels despite the organizational stressors. All groups showed reasonable levels of resilient coping and low levels of non-resilient coping at both times.

The research shows some support for the effectiveness of the resilience training, although the results are interpreted with caution due to the small sample size and the different exposure to work stressors of the control group. Further research on resilience is recommended.
Acknowledgements

I am immensely grateful to a number of people for their support, without which this research would not have been possible.

Dr. Dianne Gardner for her faith, encouragement and guidance.

Associate professor Dr. Doug Paton for his guidance in the early stages of this research and Dr. Stuart Carr for his assistance.

Dr. Sven Hansen of the Resilience Institute and all the staff at CHH Woodproducts who took part in this research.

A special thank-you to my friend Andrea for her love, inspiration and hope.

And a huge thank-you to everyone who in little and big ways supported me in my endeavors to complete this project, including my parents for their love and patience, and for looking after Ros. And a special thank-you to John Batchelor for giving me time off work to complete my study.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................. i
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................... ii
Table of Contents ........................................................................................... iii
List of Tables .................................................................................................. vii
List of Figures ................................................................................................ viii

Chapter 1: Introduction .................................................................................. 1
  Defining resilience ......................................................................................... 2

Chapter 2: Stress and organizational change ............................................. 4
  Occupational stress ....................................................................................... 4
  Organizational change .................................................................................. 5
  Protective factors ......................................................................................... 7

Chapter 3: Resilience .................................................................................... 10
  Adversity ...................................................................................................... 12
  Organizational factors .................................................................................. 13
  Individual vulnerability factors .................................................................. 13
  Resilience ..................................................................................................... 14
    Physical resilience ....................................................................................... 14
    Emotional resilience ................................................................................... 16
    Cognitive resilience ................................................................................... 17
    Spiritual resilience ...................................................................................... 23
  Resilience and coping .................................................................................. 24
    Personality ................................................................................................. 28
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellbeing</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restructure Impact measures</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7: Results</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of resilience training on stress and wellbeing</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of the restructuring at Time 1</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience training and coping at Time 2</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience training and curiosity</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of the restructuring at Time 2</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 3</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress and wellbeing at Time 3</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of the restructuring at Time 3</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping styles at Time 3</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of resilience training on curiosity and exploration at Time 3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of resilience training between Time 1 and Time 3</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress and wellbeing</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of resilience training between Time 2 and Time 3</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restructure Impact</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative feedback from the interviews with management</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Factors giving rise to stress in November ............................................................. 105
The scope of the change experienced .................................................................. 107
Different impact at different times of the year ................................................. 108
Factors that acted as a buffer to stress ................................................................. 109
Chapter 8: Discussion .......................................................................................... 111
Implications for research and practice ............................................................... 115
Conclusion ............................................................................................................ 117
List of Tables

Table 1  Gender Distribution by Group 57
Table 2  Age by Group 58
Table 3  Ethnicity by Group 58
Table 4  Management Position by Group 59
Table 5  Reliability Coefficients for the COPE Scales 69
Table 6  Correlation Matrix for Time 1 Stress and Wellbeing Variables 73
Table 7  Correlation Matrix for Time 2 Coping and Curiosity Variables 81
Table 8  Correlations between Coping, Curiosity and the Restructure Impact Variables 87
Table 9  Correlation Matrix for Time 3 Stress, Wellbeing, Coping and Curiosity Variables 90
List of Figures

Figure 1. Individual resilience model 12
Figure 2. Stress levels at Time 1 75
Figure 3. Life satisfaction at Time 1 76
Figure 4. Positive and negative affect at Time 1 77
Figure 5. Restructure impact at Time 1 78
Figure 6. Use of resilient coping at Time 2 82
Figure 7. Use of less resilient coping at Time 2 83
Figure 8. Resilient and non-resilient coping at Time 2 84
Figure 9. Impact of restructure at Time 2 86
Figure 10. Stress levels at Time 3 92
Figure 11. Life satisfaction at Time 3 93
Figure 12. Positive and negative affect at Time 3 93
Figure 13. Restructure impact at Time 3 95
Figure 14. Use of resilient coping at Time 3 97
Figure 15. Use of less resilient coping styles at Time 3 98
Figure 16. Resilient and non-resilient coping styles at Time 3 98
Figure 17. Negative affect scores at Time 1 and Time 3 102