LECTURER RESILIENCE DURING STUDENT UNREST: A SOUTH AFRICAN CASE STUDY

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Abstract

Over the past few years, local and international universities have seen considerable student unrest in response to unaffordable tuition fees and inequality and even pressures from the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, resilience becomes evident in the way people behave in adverse situations. Especially for developing lecturers, resilience may help to respond appropriately to adverse situations, regardless of where the pressures originated from. Therefore, this study investigated the role resilience played in the teaching behaviours and approaches displayed by lecturers during student unrest. Semi-structured interviews and the Brief Resilience Scale were applied to generate data from 16 participants. Findings reveal that most lecturers displayed moderate to high levels of resilience and study results strongly relate to the multi-dimensional teacher resilience framework selected for exploring the topic. What emerged, was the lecturers' determination to teach, as well as their personal agency and collaboration, all contributing to an ability to successfully fulfil their responsibilities. The findings of this study may add value to how university management structures could assist lecturers during times of adversity

Key words: resilience, lecturers, higher education, brief resilience scale, student unrest

1. INTRODUCTION

Research on teacher resilience has concentrated on teachers' abilities and the characteristics that enable them to react positively in adverse situations (Beltman *et al.*, 2018; Mansfield *et al.*, 2012). Such abilities and characteristics include optimism, problem-solving and reflection skills, as well as attribution and self-efficacy beliefs (Gibbs & Miller, 2014; Hong, 2012; Leroux & Theoret, 2014). Other studies have focused on the various strategies teachers use to positively adapt to adverse situations (Castro, Kelly & Shih, 2010; Jiang *et al.*, 2016; Mansfield, Beltman & Price, 2014), whereas some have focused on resilience as an outcome of positive adaptation to adverse situations (Ebersöhn, 2014; Gu & Day, 2013).

The term resilience first emerged in the fields of psychology and psychiatry in the 1970s when it was used to describe the positive development of children who grew up in abusive families, were exposed to trauma, or experienced parental divorce (Pogosyan, 2017). Although resilience was initially used and researched in psychology and psychiatry, it has since been adopted in many other fields, including education. While various definitions have been ascribed to teacher resilience (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Birchinall, Spendlove & Buck, 2019; Silva *et al.*, 2018; Tait, 2008), the one aspect these definitions have in common is the fact that resilience is a "dynamic process or outcome that is the result of interaction over time between a person and the environment" (Beltman, Mansfield & Price, 2011: 188). Resilience is also evidenced by how individuals respond to challenging or adverse situations (Mansfield *et al.*, 2016). Thus far, research on teacher resilience has focused mainly on high teacher attrition rates, that is, most researchers have been interested in studying the teachers who chose to stay, instead of studying those who opted to leave.

Although numerous studies have been conducted on resilience in education, these studies dealt mainly with exploring how teachers in primary and high schools manage to stay positively committed to their teaching duties despite the difficult work conditions they experience. There is, however, a need to also report on lecturer resilience. Specifically, how lecturers cope in times of adversity, and how they manage to stay positively committed to their teaching duties in adverse situations such as student unrest or, more recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic. In recent years, many universities around the world (including in South Africa) have had to deal with unexpected spates of student unrest. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate the resilience that lecturers at the case study university in South Africa exhibited during student unrest. We wanted to examine if resilience played any role in the actions, behaviours or responses pertaining to teaching that the lecturers displayed during the student unrest. While we anticipate the findings of this study will be relevant to

other universities locally and internationally to assist their staff/lecturers during times of adversity, more future research is required.

1.1. Student unrest within higher education institution as context

The student unrest that led to this study started in 2015 and focused primarily on student fees, which resulted in it being labelled #FEESMUSTFALL during the nationwide protests that continued in 2016. When protesting students became destructive in their actions and many universities suffered damage to property, and closed their campuses for extended periods (Hodes, 2017; Isilow, 2016; Luescher, Loader & Mugume, 2017).

At the university where this study was conducted, and in an attempt to minimise damage to property, a deliberate decision was made by management to close its campuses for normal access by students. Face-to-face contact with students was replaced by online contact through the university's Learning Management System (LMS). Due to the nature of their disciplines, two faculties (Engineering and Sciences) received permission to allow a limited number of students per day on campus. This decision was met with resistance from lecturing staff who advocated for more time, as the modules in the sciences and engineering need practical sessions, and explanation of calculations work better in a face-to-face setting. Lecturers had to be extremely innovative to use the limited contact time optimally and to support further learning via the LMS. These lecturers were also encouraged not to use contact time for assessments, but rather for active learning. Additionally, lecturers had to implement new ways of assessment by using online modalities, but fortunately the university had already been advocating for and training lecturers in blended learning for several years by then.

These blended learning approaches (including online assessment modalities) meant that the 2016 academic year was saved, and students could write their final examination, albeit in varied formats. In January 2017, the Science Faculty decided to conduct a debriefing session and at the same time share good practice based on all the innovations that had been implemented during 2016. All the departments were invited to send representatives to share their stories, but since there were 16 departments at the time, they were restricted to the Pecha Kucha[1] (Beyer, 2011) format. We took the option of 14 slides shown for 20 seconds each, resulting in a fast-paced sharing of highlights and essential information. The presenters were briefed, the session was video-taped and the data was analysed for publication (Tekane, Louw & Potgieter, 2018). However, during our analysis of the data, we realised that although the different lecturers had been exposed to similar stressors such as threats to personal safety and challenges in finishing the course work when access to campus for the students was restricted, they reacted in different ways. Some struggled to cope and became unproductive and dissatisfied with their working environment, while others were able to successfully navigate the difficult circumstances under which they had to work (Tekane *et al.*, 2018). One of the factors that accounted for these differences in reaction was the construct of resilience.

Therefore, the aim of this study was to explore/investigate the role of resilience in lecturers' displayed behaviours during the 2016 #FEESMUSTFALL student unrest at a particular South African contact university. In order to address this aim, the main research question was: How did university lecturers experience their ability to cope with student unrest? This question resulted in two further questions, namely (i) What behaviours did the participating lecturers reportedly demonstrate in the face of adversity? and (ii) What lessons have been learnt from the experiences of the student unrest?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW ON RESILIENCE

2.1. Definitions of resilience

There is increasing interest in the construct of resilience, but researchers have yet to settle on an all-encompassing definition for the term. On the one hand, definitions imply that resilience is a method, ability or trait that allows individuals to cope with or overcome challenges or stressful events. For example, Pooley and Cohen (2010: 34) state that resilience is the "potential to exhibit resourcefulness by using available internal and external resources in response to different contextual and developmental challenges". Windle, Bennett and Noyes (2011) define resilience as "the ability to cope

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[1] Pecha Kucha (Japanese): a presentation style in which 20 slides are shown for 20 seconds each. This keeps presentations concise and fast paced (Beyer, 2011).

or otherwise positively adapt under pressure", and Pretsch and colleagues suggest that resilience is "a trait that actively fosters well-being (Pretsch, Flunger & Schmitt, 2012: 322) or a "personal resource" (p. 323).

On the other hand, it is suggested that resilience is not just a personality trait or attribute, but rather a complex construct derived from a dynamic relationship between risk factors and protective factors (Beltman *et al.*, 2011). Protective factors are used to buffer an individual against adverse conditions and enhance appropriate outcomes (Werner, 2000), and they could include personal traits such as compassion, a sense of purpose and optimism, emotional awareness and the ability to regulate emotions. Social aspects such as community and family support and religious involvement also play a role (Hamby, Grych & Banyard, 2018). Risk factors contribute to psychological distress (Tait, 2008) and may include financial strain, mental illness, and lack of social support.

It is important to note that context plays a key role in resilience, as the requirements to successfully navigate one's surroundings will vary according to the environments in which individuals find themselves. For example, resilience in the context of a mathematics classroom requires a different set of traits and protective factors than resilience in the context of social work or nursing (Mansfield *et al.*, 2016).

2.2. Resilience in the context of education

Resilience has been discussed in many diverse contexts, such as aging (Pruchno & Carr, 2017); resilience during lockdown (Killgore *et al.*, 2020); and in response to an illness such as cancer (Seiler & Jenewein, 2019). In the educational context, research has been conducted on teacher resilience in early career stages (Beltman *et al.*, 2011); among novice teachers (Tait, 2008) and teachers leaving the career (Arnup & Bowles, 2016); as well as on the link between resistance and resilience (Raider-Roth, Stieha & Hensley, 2012). Resilience in educators is a fairly new area of investigation (Beltman *et al.*, 2011), but it is gaining greater importance as a result of the demands of the profession, as evidenced by the high rate of attrition among teachers (Clarà, 2017), as well as the world's rapidly shifting educational climate. Tait (2008) found that resilience acts not only as a contributor to novice teachers' success and commitment to the profession, but also as a buffer against the demands of a high workload, lack of mentorship, and dissatisfaction with teaching assignments. Gu and Day (2007) also examined the role of resilience in teacher effectiveness and found that the interaction between teachers' self-efficacy, identity and management of the interaction between their identities and experiences contributed strongly to their resilience, which in turn was a necessary condition for teacher effectiveness. The authors state that resilience is determined by the interaction between an individual's internal resources (in this case self-efficacy) and the external context in which the individual exists (both personal and professional). These contexts can be navigated more, or less, successfully. Resilience therefore varies between individuals and changes over time, according to the environment and the individual's capacity to successfully manage that particular environment. A review by Beltman *et al.* (2011) supports this view, stating that resilience is the result of a dynamic relationship between individual and contextual risk and protective factors. Important individual risk factors include negative self-beliefs or low self-confidence, having difficulty asking for help, and perceived conflict between personal beliefs and practices being used. Contextual risk factors include insufficient or unsuitable training, balancing work and family commitments, the challenges of online teaching, disruptive students, and heavy workload (Beltman *et al.*, 2011). Individual protective factors include altruistic motives, strong intrinsic motivation, and self-efficacy. Contextual protective factors include supportive administrative staff and structures, mostly in the form of strong and well-organised leadership, as well as meaningful feedback (Beltman *et al.*, 2011). Mentorship relationships and peer support are also considered important contextual protective factors (Beltman *et al.*, 2011). While there is still some debate concerning the precise meaning of resilience in teachers, there is agreement that teacher resilience occurs when a teacher adjusts positively to a difficult situation (Clarà, 2017).

Tugade and Fredrickson (2004) have shown that one of the key factors of resilience is positive emotions. The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001) suggests that resilient individuals can quickly and effectively bounce back from stressful events because they use positive emotions to rebound from stress and find positive meaning in difficult situations. More specifically, Tugade and Fredrickson (2004) found that positive emotions contributed to individuals' ability to regulate their emotions effectively, recover from negative emotional arousal, and find positive meaning in negative experiences. Panchal, Mukherjee and Kumar (2016), in exploring the

relationships between optimism, well-being, resilience and perceived stress, found that optimism had a significant positive relationship with resilience. Similarly, Luthans, Youssef and Avolio (2015) suggest that hopeful employees are more creative in their thinking and operate from an internal locus of control. As mentioned earlier, during the #FEESMUSTFALL unrest, lecturers were exposed to many negative experiences. Our research suggests that variations in individual resilience allowed lecturers to both cope with and even thrive during the unrest, or to lose motivation, hope and the ability to cope (see 6.2).

2.3. Measures of resilience

Granziera, Collie and Martin (2021) argue that under specific circumstances teachers experiencing similar stressors will react differently. Therefore, resilience should ideally be studied further to consider how different kinds of job demands relate differently to motivation. Several measures have been developed to determine resilience levels in both children and adults. Some focus on protective factors that facilitate resilience, such as psychological hardiness in the Dispositional Resilience Scale (Bartone *et al.*, 1989); acceptance of self and life in the Resilience Scale (Wagnild & Young, 1993); resiliency attitudes in the Resilience Attitudes and Skills Profile (Hurtes & Allen, 2001); interpersonal and intrapersonal protective factors presumed to facilitate adaptation to psychosocial adversities in the Resilience Scale for Adults (Friborg *et al.*, 2003), and personal competence in the Psychological Resilience Scale (Windle, Markland & Woods, 2008). However, the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS), as developed by Smith *et al.* (2008), was designed as an outcome measure to specifically assess the ability to bounce back or recover from stress. According to the authors this ability to bounce back is the original and most basic meaning of the word resilience, and the strength of the BRS is that it is not designed for a specific context and can thus be used in many different fields (Coelho *et al.*, 2016). The broad measure of resilience, combined with the ability to use the scale in several contexts, ensures that the BRS is appropriate for use in the current study. In a systematic review of the psychometric properties of resilience scales developed for use in general and clinical populations, the BRS was one of the measures that received the best psychometric ratings (Windle *et al.*, 2011). In addition, studies demonstrated that the BRS is appropriate for use in non-Western and culturally varied populations such as in South Africa (Amat *et al.*, 2014; Coelho *et al.*, 2016).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: A FOUR DIMENSIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHER RESILIENCE

Mansfield *et al.* (2012) developed a framework for illustrating the "overarching and overlapping nature of the aspects of teacher resilience," (p. 361). The framework consists of four dimensions, namely, the profession-related dimension, the emotional dimension, the motivational dimension, and the social dimension. The profession-related dimension encompasses aspects related to the practice of teaching. Such aspects include preparation, being organised, reflective, committed to students, and using effective teaching skills. The emotional dimension, on the other hand, includes aspects addressing emotional responses to teaching experiences, emotional management and coping with stress. The motivational dimension involves aspects such as self-efficacy, persistence, perseverance, and the continued aspiration to learn and improve. The social dimension addresses social interactions within the work environment: such interactions include building support and relationship networks, solving problems through asking for assistance, and taking advice. This framework was identified as appropriate for our study because it did not only allow us to classify the behaviours portrayed by the lecturers into one of the four dimensions, but it also highlighted the "multi-dimensional and interwoven nature of teacher resilience" (p. 363). The framework has been used in multiple other studies such as the study conducted by Platsidou and Daniilidou (2021).

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

4.1. Study settings, participants, recruitment and data collection

This case study was conducted at a research-intensive university in South Africa. The participants included: i) lecturers from the Science Faculty (SF) who participated in a Pecha Kucha event held in February 2017 (Tekane *et al.*, 2018); ii) Heads of Departments (HoDs) in the SF; and iii) other lecturers from the SF recommended by HoDs as information-rich individuals. Convenience sampling and snowball sampling (Marshall, 1996) were used, and participants were invited by email and telephone to participate in the study. Before the commencement of the interviews, participants were

informed about the aims and potential benefits of the study and asked to sign a consent form if they were interested in participating. In total, 12 lecturers and four HoDs participated. Pseudonyms were employed to protect the identities of the participants. R1-R5 represent the colleagues who were involved in the Pecha Kucha event and took part in the first focus group interview session (FGI1). R6-16 represent HoDs and the lecturers they recommended as information rich participants for our study. The lecturers took part in the second focus group interview (FGI2) and the HoDs took part in individual interviews. Furthermore, ethical clearance (EC180531-191) and institutional permission were granted by the relevant structures of the university where the study was conducted.

The Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) (Smith *et al.*, 2008) is a self-rating questionnaire aimed at measuring the ability of an individual to bounce back in the face of adversity. As shown in Table 1, the BRS questionnaire consists of six questions of which three are negatively worded and three are positively worded. The participating lecturers completed the BRS questionnaire by indicating on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) the extent to which they agreed with the BRS statements. The lecturers were also invited to take part in focus group interviews (Nieuwenhuis, 2011). The HoDs did not complete the BRS questionnaire but instead participated in individual face-to-face interview sessions (Nieuwenhuis, 2011). All the interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed as will be described in subsequent sections.

Table 1: The BRS questionnaire.

BRS statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times					
I have a hard time making it through stressful events					
It does not take long to recover from a stressful event					
It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens					
I usually come through difficult times with little trouble					
I tend to take a long time to get over set-backs in my life					

4.2. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to analyse the data collected from the interviews. Prior to analysing this data, the researcher read through the transcripts to familiarise herself with the data. Once familiar with the data, the researcher generated preliminary codes by reading through the transcripts line by line, underlining and coding each line that informed her of the role of resilience on the lecturers' perceived behaviours displayed during the 2016 student unrest. In some instances, the labels used for the codes emerged directly from the data (*in vivo* codes), whereas in some cases they came from the researcher's mind (Saldaña, 2015). Once the initial coding was done, the researcher compared the codes to see if there were any similar codes that could be merged to form overarching categories that address the stated research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process was followed by refining the categories by reading through the excerpts of each category to check if they formed a coherent pattern. In cases where they did not form a coherent pattern, such excerpts were either moved to other categories or the categories were renamed. Once the researcher was satisfied with the refined categories, she read through the data excerpts under each category. The latter was done to obtain a detailed description of what each category revealed regarding the role that resilience played in the lecturers' behaviours during the unrest. The categories were further fitted into the four dimensions of the theoretical framework.

4.2.1. Analysis of BRS

The individual scores for the BRS were determined by adding the responses for all six items, reverse-coding items 2, 4 and 6, giving a range between 6 and 30, and then finding the individual mean of the six items. Scores that fell below 3 were considered low in resilience, and scores above 4.3 were

considered high in resilience. Scores ranging between 3 and 4.3 indicated normal levels of resilience. Descriptive statistics for the BRS scores of the sample (mean and standard deviation) were also determined (see 6.2).

5. RESULTS

This section will discuss the interview data based on the research questions as stipulated in 2.1.

5.1. RQ-1: Interview data: Lecturers' behaviours displayed in the face of adversity

5.1.1. Determination to teach

Lecturers seemed determined to teach, regardless of the danger to which they were exposing themselves. Some lecturers felt they had to teach because teaching was their job, as was reflected by the response of R4: "*It's our job. That's what we get paid for.*" Other lecturers felt they had no option but to teach so as to help the students learn and complete the syllabus. The latter notion is portrayed in the following statements made by R7 and R3: "*As lecturers we want to teach. We want them to learn. That was my ultimate goal. Let's try and get them through*" (R7); "*I think [for] most of us there wasn't an option ever to not continue. I mean it wasn't on the cards. [..] it was we need to do this and we need to finish that*" (R3). Although they were determined to teach, it was difficult to have contact sessions with the students on campus, therefore lecturers such as R16 and R2 made alternative arrangements to meet students off-campus: "*I just said one way or the other we are going to have contact session [sessions] with the students; we cannot have it on campus but let's make a plan*" (R16); "*Well I think sometime, like for instance the exam. We wrote at a church, [..], so we had to look for venues, arrange to get them as vendors, to get them paid, and then took the students to the church*" (R2). Furthermore, some lecturers were willing to adapt to using technology in order to continue teaching, as stated by R5, "*We are told a lot about this hybrid model and that we need to combine F2F [face-to-face] with online, but unless you get forced to do it, you don't make time to do it. This was a case where you were forced to investigate these other alternatives. [..] We made videos and things we didn't do before.*"

5.1.2. Worry and frustration

Despite the lecturers' determination to continue teaching during the unrest, they had concerns about their safety and the risk of being attacked or confronted by a large number of students. For example, a lecturer remarked as follows: "*I did wonder what I would do if I am in a lecture venue with several hundred students and someone threw a petrol bomb inside. So I did have those kinds of anxieties: How would I handle an actual violent conflict situation?*" (R10). Lecturers such as R4 were frustrated because on-campus access for the students was very limited: "*I think the biggest thing I remember was the fights I had to get students on campus. We couldn't really comprehend why it was so restrictive and the quotas that were given didn't make sense at all.*" Other lecturers were frustrated because communication lines between them as lecturers and the university management were not transparent; thus, they hardly knew what the university was planning. In support of the latter, R3 said: "*The problem was exactly that. The communication was extremely bad. From our side we couldn't explain anything. Every single decision seemed like an overreaction from the university's side. Other than frustration with the fact that we were not given information and that that style still manifests itself in various ways, so I really put the spotlight on the fact that there is a lack of communication from higher up downwards.*"

5.1.3. Collaboration between staff

Some lecturers were not willing to adapt and start using different teaching styles as stated by R13: "*The other ones who are more towards the older side who don't like the idea of change, [..], the more rigid ones were more stuck in their ways and said that this is how we do it. This is the best and there is no other way.*" Other lecturers such as R8 embraced the challenge and stated: "*…made videos for each lecture, had to learn how. I posted it on YouTube and the LMS [Learning Management System]. It was work, but I hope it helped.*" Since not all lecturers were familiar with technology, the lecturers had discussions where "*they taught each other; the staff taught each other how to do it and had several discussions on those who had the skills and actually shared it with the others*" (R14).

Furthermore, the lecturers also "*organised sessions for when someone figured out how to put a video on the LMS; we would organise a session which everyone could attend to learn*" (R13).

5.2. RQ-1: BRS data: Lecturers' behaviours displayed in the face of adversity

As set out in Figure 1 below, two individuals scored below 3 on the BRS, indicating low resilience; five individuals scored between 3 and 4, indicating average resilience; and three individuals scored 4.3 and above, indicating high resilience. Descriptive statistics revealed a mean of 3.7 for the group, with a standard deviation of 0.6.
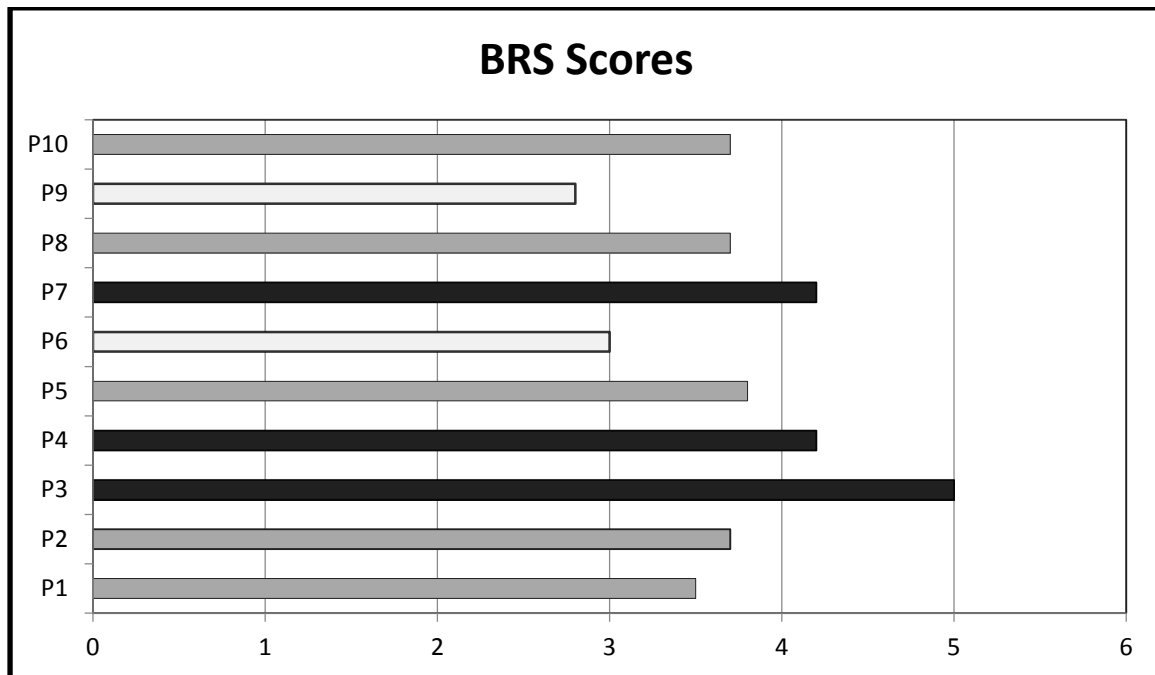

Figure 1: Resilience scores: High resilience is represented by black; low resilience is represented by light grey; and average resilience is represented by dark grey. P1 to P10 were used instead of the stated pseudonyms in order to increase anonymity and prevent the participants from identifying each other's scores.

Additionally, Table 2 below provides examples of quotations from the lecturers which revealed their thoughts, memories and experiences of the student unrest. These quotations provide insight into how the lecturers coped, or struggled to cope, with the adverse situation.

Table 2: Selected quotations portraying lecturers' resilience

BRS	Examples of quotations from the lecturers
a) **High resilience**	"It's our job. That's what we get paid for. That's what you want to do so you had to get on with it and make plan B and C and whatever. I think the one thing that we can credit the uni [university] is that we completed that year in December. It wasn't postponed and then would have a ripple effect. I think that was for many of us also a drive, to just make sure that we can complete the year by December." (R4). "As lecturers we want to teach. We want them to learn. That was my ultimate goal. Let's try and get them through." (R7).
b) **Low resilience**	"So videos I didn't even attempt and it has to do with the fact that I realise students don't have access to devices to see the videos. Not a matter of students didn't want to see the videos, it's just simply they couldn't." (R1).

| c) Average resilience | "Also for the lecturers: How should we do it, what should we do? So I think uncertainty is the word I want to highlight [..]" but some of the things that I learned during that time (e.g. using Qualtrics) later on paid of well. I was so grateful for it as I could use it to make questionnaires easily and collect data" (R2). |
| | "I have no lasting memory of … you know, personal cost. I don't have memories of how much sleep I lost … you just did what you have to do you know… I have… you did what was necessary," (R3). |

5.3. Multiple dimensions of resilience portrayed by the lecturers

The multidimensional nature of resilience was evident in the results presented in the above sections. The lecturers' determination to teach portrayed more than one of the four dimensions of resilience discussed in the theoretical framework (A Four-Dimensional Framework for Teacher Resilience, Section 4). Some responses (lecturers R4, R7 and R3) included aspects in the profession-related dimension as lecturers showed commitment to teaching their students. Other responses (lecturers R16 and R2) showed aspects of social dimension as the lecturers made alternative arrangements to meet and teach students off-campus, while other lecturers (R14 and R13) built support networks in order to help and teach each other. Aspects of motivational dimension were included as the lecturers (R5 and R8) showed persistence and willingness to learn using technology to continue teaching. With regards to worry and frustration, the lecturers' responses (R10) included aspects of emotional dimension as the lecturers were able to manage their emotions, even though they were concerned about their safety while teaching.

5.4. RQ-2: Lessons learnt: Interview data

5.4.1. Adopting blended teaching is a double-edged sword

Lecturers' experiences of teaching during student unrest made them aware of the importance of adopting the blended learning approach in their teaching and making use of the LMS. This notion was reflected in the remark by R13: "*I think last year in 2017 everyone was a bit more alert and made sure that they had more stuff in an electronic format and they still do that, and from what they have said they are using the LMS much better than before.*" Although technology enabled the lecturers to teach during student unrest, some lecturers argued that "…*you cannot teach mathematics with technology only. We need the students in front of us. It does not help we do all sorts of videos.*" (R8). Although blended teaching was useful during the turbulent times, the lecturers realised that most students who were affected by the 2016 student unrest had a different attitude towards their studies because, "*they seem to lack ownership, lack initiative [..] and bunk classes, they feel that the ownership is on the lecturer to provide for them and to feed them.*" (R14). Furthermore, the lecturers realised that since the students passed their exams in 2016 despite having not attended classes, they "*do not regard class attendance as important [..] because in the hybrid model all things are available on the LMS. It is a knock-on effect, because that year there were no classes and they passed.*" (R1).

5.4.2. Lack of foundational knowledge

Due to the unrest, normal lectures stopped, student-lecturer contact time was greatly reduced, and lecturers were forced to finish a month's work in two weeks. Hence, the lecturers did not have the opportunity to sufficiently teach the foundational knowledge required in subsequent years/levels. The lecturers remarked that they *"[..] could see in the following years that the building blocks were not all there, it might have been worse for numerical subjects such as mathematics than for other modules which do not build one on top of the other one with a new course and material. But in our main calculus modules especially, more than the algebra, we could see that and now they are third years, and we can still see that."* (R13). Furthermore, lecturers stated that although some students passed on to the third year, they could "*see some students struggling there. Students who did not have sufficient background [..] and information we would have added if we had more lectures and more opportunities to talk to them and more pracs they would have had a better background to fall back on.*" (R3).

6. DISCUSSION

BRS scores revealed low resilience in only two of the participating lecturers (P6 & P9). Examples of behaviour associated with low resilience include inflexibility and cynicism, as was demonstrated by a lack of willingness to learn or use new methods of teaching or finding different venues in which to accommodate face-to-face meetings with students. Lecturers had to adapt to similar challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic: these included social isolation from colleagues, the need to rapidly adapt to online teaching which was unfamiliar to some and unexpected technical difficulties associated with the switch to a new mode of teaching. In fact, technical difficulties have been implicated as a factor that poses a specific challenge for lecturers during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hidayat & Wibaba, 2020). As a result, the importance of resilience is and will always be vital, not just during times of unrest, but during any adversity. If resilience is not fostered in lecturers, those low in resilience will struggle to flourish during times of adversity. While five lecturers demonstrated average resilience (R1, R2, R5, R8 & R10), it should be noted that their BRS scores were mostly on the higher end of the scale. Furthermore, these lecturers still demonstrated good resilience in the face of adversity, despite some uncertainty and worry, especially with regard to communication. Communication plays an important role in crisis management, specifically during the response (during the event) and recovery (after the event) phases of a crisis (Hale, Dulek, & Hale, 2005), and is also identified as a particular concern for lecturers during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hidayat & Wibaba, 2020). Communication as a crisis response consists of informing individuals of ongoing events, and of decisions made by those in charge. Once an organization is in the recovery phase, it is important to learn from the event and manage the event externally (Hale *et al.*, 2005). It is clear from the interviews that lecturers struggled due to the perceived lack of communication from university management structures. Similarly, during the current COVID-19 pandemic, lecturers working from home require consistent communication from their institutions to bolster resilience. Furthermore, "clear and compassionate communication with all stakeholders of higher education," is essential in order to assist lecturers to "achieve more focused learning outcomes and develop effective e-learning methods," (Rashid and Yadav, 2020: 20).

According to the literature, resilience is multidimensional and incorporates various personal qualities and strategies that are employed during adverse situations to "bounce back," (Castro *et al.*, 2010). Using the resilience framework of Mansfield *et al.* (2012), our study illustrated the various qualities and strategies the lecturers used to "bounce back" and continue teaching. Such qualities included determination and commitment to continue teaching (profession-related dimension), ability to manage emotions and stress in adverse situations (emotional dimension), persistence and willingness to learn (motivational dimension), and building support networks to assist one another. Attributes such as perseverance, determination and persistence are examples of protective factors possessed by resilient teachers. Resilience is also seen as "a capacity, a process and also an outcome" (Mansfield *et al.*, 2016: 80). When faced with adversity, resilient teachers usually concentrate on how they can positively respond to the adverse situation rather than to focus on the situation itself; a process that acknowledges resilience is not static (Mansfield, *et al.*, 2016). This sense of personal agency, or the ability to take control of how to effectively respond to a situation, was revealed in the lecturers' capacity to find innovative ways to deal with the university's closure and the virtual suspension of face-to-face lectures due to the student unrest.

Research has shown that collaborative working and problem solving – that is, having the ability to find alternative ways of solving a problem or a dilemma – are qualities of resilience (Rees *et al.*, 2015). In our study (6.1.3) lecturers "taught each other" in order to master the needed skills.

7. CONCLUSION

Our study has contributed to a better understanding of the choices lecturers have to make and the behaviour they display during times of difficulty and challenge. Most of the participating lecturers displayed moderate to high levels of resilience (Figure 1), which importantly contributed to their ability to finish course work and complete the academic year (6.1.1). This was despite students having limited or no access to campus. While lecturers were aware of the dangers, they continued to find ways to contact their students off campus and were innovative in their use of alternative resources to get the lecture content to students. The various qualities of resilience displayed by lecturers – perseverance, determination, adaptability, personal agency and problem solving – all contributed to them completing the year successfully.

University management can benefit from our findings (6.1.2) by realising the importance of honest and transparent communication to keep staff informed, specifically during adverse situations such as student unrest and the current COVID-19 pandemic. Developing a suitable communication protocol for challenging times when on-campus teaching and learning becomes impossible would go a long way towards assisting lecturers to maintain healthy functioning in the face of adversity. Appropriate and timely communication would decrease feelings of uncertainty, thereby diminishing stress experienced by individuals who have low or moderate resilience. Our research also revealed the need for capacity development workshops that could aid in developing lecturers' resilience. Resilient lecturers are better able to cope with difficult circumstances, they have better emotion regulation and they interact more effectively in social environments (Tait, 2008).

Since some lecturers reported being overwhelmed by the reigning situation and inexperienced in the use of technology to replace face-to-face lectures, it would seem advisable to make it compulsory for lecturers to follow training programmes focusing on the use of various platforms for blended learning. The latter would allow lecturers to use technology confidently and comfortably in situations such as student unrest or the current COVID-19 pandemic where face-to-face classes have been replaced by online learning (Rashid and Yadav, 2020).

Finally, it needs to be admitted that our study involved a small sample of lecturers and that our findings are not generalisable. Also, that the study was conducted two years after the student unrest, which could have an effect on the lecturers' memory of events. Overall, however, the study contributed to a better understanding of lecturer resilience during disruptive and challenging times in South African higher education.

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