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The importance of resilience

In March 2020, the global coronavirus pandemic also led to changes in many areas of life in Europe. In order to contain the spread of infection, regulations were drawn up to largely restrict contact with other people. These ranged from masks to contact restrictions to prevent more than five people from meeting in one household. Restaurants, theatres, cinemas and pubs were temporarily closed and purchases could only be made under strict conditions. This meant considerable stress for many people, as their normal habits were disrupted overnight. They could no longer go to work as usual (home office) they could no longer meet their family and friends (contact restrictions), they could no longer pursue their entertainment and leisure activities (temporary closures) and they suddenly found themselves at home all day with all other family members (partners, children), with everyone actually claiming access to their home laptop. Due to this increased stress level, 'resilience' became the focus of interest for scientists and therapists. The number of cases of domestic violence increased significantly, as did the number of requests for help.

Resilience research has played a key role in various sub-disciplines of psychology for years. Due to the pandemic (although it could also be triggered by something else => financial crisis, terrorist threat, war) and the associated changes in almost all areas of human life, the ability to cope well with change has become even more relevant than it already was in a fast-moving and dynamic society.

Resilience generally describes human resistance to stressful life circumstances. As an opposite term to vulnerability, resilience is described as psychological robustness, resistance or invulnerability (Gabriel, 2005). People with a high level of resilience are therefore able to quickly and acutely deal with unknown situations and issues and then return to a state of relaxation. According to Stork et al., resilience enables 'to successfully overcome crises and emerge stronger from them through the flexible use of personal resources' (Stork, Heimes, Aatz, & Boll, 2020, p. 5). An influence on the subjective experience of stress is therefore obvious. To date, resilience has often been understood in the literature as a personal stable resource, which is also reflected in previous instruments for measuring resilience (Henninger, 2016, p. 158) (Pangallo, Zibarras, Lewis, & Flaxman, 2014). However, more recent contributions also underline the effectiveness of resilience as situationally changeable behaviour that can be

learned through various training courses (Soucek, Schlett, Ziegler & Pauls, 2015). Resilience can also be understood as an integrative construct that encompasses both stable, personal resources and unstable, learnable behavioural patterns. These two parts of resilience have different degrees of influence on the subjective experience of stress. It would therefore be interesting to investigate whether resilient behaviour is more strongly influenced by a resilient personality or by resilient patterns.

Country	Age Group	Phenomena	Area
Germany	18 – 30 Years	Loneliness Insecurity Loss of contact Gaps in the range	Meetings with friends Sports training Cinema / restaurant / club Learning together
Finland	50 – 80 Years	Loneliness Fears Conspiracy theories Lack of prospects	Rifts in family and friend groups due to vaccination discussions Lack of contact
Ireland	50 – 80 Years	Loneliness Supply problems Restriction of mobility Helplessness	Problems in a structurally weak area, lack of logistics, no shopping assistance for the elderly
Latvia	12 – 35 Years	Loneliness Helplessness Conspiracy theories Boredom	Lack of social contacts, unsettling fake news, Problems in the family environment
Lithuania	12 – 30 Years	Loneliness Fears Lack of prospects Boredom	Lack of social contacts, Uncertainty, no clear statements about duration, resentment
Slovakia	12 – 25 Years	Loneliness Domestic violence Helplessness Lack of contact persons	Pronounced isolation, explosive family situation, contradictory information

Previous research in this area rarely differentiates between resilience as a personal resource and resilient behavioural patterns. There are already some studies on the influence of resilience on the experience of stress, but these results relate exclusively to the experience of stress in the German work context, which is due to the fact that no comprehensive social stress situation such as a pandemic has yet had to be dealt with.

In times of a global pandemic, it makes sense to conduct research beyond national borders and strive for results that can be generalised for several countries. During the project phase, we found that comparable phenomena occurred in the participating countries:

A similar picture emerges in the various countries. Above all, the isolation, the lack of social contact and the uncertainty caused by contradictory information, fake news and conspiracy theories was great. When it came to conspiracy theories in particular, the special situation had to be taken into account, as the opportunity to discuss different views with others was virtually non-existent; everyone researched individually on the internet, where all kinds of information was circulating. All with a claim to validity. Those who were sitting at home alone, already irritated by the exceptional situation, were particularly susceptible to ‘whispers’ of all kinds. The manipulation that was made possible by this has not yet been analysed. There were overlaps between different groups: Vaccination opponents, corona deniers, government critics, opponents of conventional medicine and a whole host of charlatans who were riding one or all of these waves.

It is worth noting another aspect that characterises this phase: People donated to various measures and countermeasures, they wanted to support activists or make their opposition to the restrictions visible. A lot of money disappeared into dubious channels during this period, which will probably never be fully clarified. However, there is extensive research and reporting literature on crime during this phase, and Palmowski presents comprehensive statistics on crime during this phase and on changes compared to previous years.¹ The Federal Criminal Police

¹ For example, the number of cases of subsidy fraud registered by the police rose from 318 in 2019 to 7,585 in 2020 (BKA, 2020a; BKA, 2021b; BKA, 2021a). This could be due, among other things, to fraud offences involving coronavirus emergency aid (for possible case structures, see Hoven/Hahn, 2020). The number of police-registered offences under the Infection Protection Act increased from 61 in 2019 to 6,779 cases in 2020, which is also a significant increase (BKA, 2020a; BKA, 2021b; BKA, 2021a). The increase in registered offences involving the internet (+8.7%) was also greater than in previous years. This is possibly due to more opportunities to commit cybercrime, as economic and everyday activities increasingly took place digitally as a result of the coronavirus pandemic (BKA, 2021a; BKA, 2020b). cf: Nina Palmowski, CORONA EFFECTS IN STATISTICS ON CRIMINAL OFFENCES, p. 2,

Office (BKA) makes a clear statement on politically motivated crime.² As early as March 2020, a working group was set up to record the criminal impact of the regulations to contain the pandemic. The report from the Federal Criminal Police Office cited here is from 2021.

There are also figures on domestic violence, which has also increased, although offences such as burglaries, shoplifting, pickpocketing and traffic offences have decreased because there has been little or no opportunity to take action in these areas due to the lockdown.

These quotes show that the regulations during the pandemic certainly had an impact on everyday life. The project partners recorded these effects in the short videos during the work phases. These short videos show how loneliness, conspiracy theories or vaccination scepticism, for example, have affected social groups.

During the course of the project, it became clear that the effects were more subtle in many areas than had been assumed at the start of the project. It became clear that social contacts could not be replaced by Zoom meetings and that the special situation for elderly people in structurally weak areas was really critical. These aspects are also taken up again in the diary notes from the corona phase, so that individual confirmations of the general statements can also be found.

The importance of a stable personality, a clear personal standpoint and resilience can be seen in all the modules. People who are stable and at peace with themselves are less likely to be unsettled. Groups that are stable beyond their primary interest in sport, language and art and that are able to react flexibly were able to ‘survive’ better than those units that stopped meeting and disbanded at the first disturbances.

Reference: https://www.destatis.de/DE/Methoden/WISTA-Wirtschaft-und-Statistik/2022/04/corona-effekte-statistiken-zu-strafsachen-042022.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

² The protests against the government measures to contain the pandemic should be mentioned primarily here. whose participants can be described as a heterogeneous ‘mixed scene’. This scene is united by a general criticism of the coronavirus protection measures and, at least in part, a anti-state to anti-government stance. A leading role in this continues to be played by the ‘Querdenken’ movement initiated by the civil democratic spectrum, which quickly spread nationwide. In 2020, it appeared with a plethora of regional offshoots by organising numerous meeting registrations. Due to the lockdown, which recently lasted several weeks of lockdown, the number of protests fell sharply or increasingly took the form of motorcades organised in the form of car parades. Federal Criminal Police Office, Management report, Effects of COVID-19 on the crime situation in Germany, as at 15/06/21, p. 5

Reference: file:///C:/Users/ulrik/Downloads/covidAuswirkungen.pdf

Based on the material developed, a training course has been designed to show concrete examples in which resilience helps to master the situation. This course lasts three days and is based on information, examples, role plays and exercises to build resilience. The course could only be tested in parts during the project period - for example, the 'role play' aspect was trained in a workshop at the University of Liepaja in September 2023. The exercise was called 'Comfort on Stage' and the participants practised supporting each other and learning to perceive each other's condition. The participants found these exercises to be unreservedly helpful.

Photos from the workshop:





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