

# Determinants of Career Resilience and Career Success During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Fairuzzabadi, Syarifah Rahmawati, & Mirza Tabrani  
fairuzzabadi@unsyiah.ac.id., syarifahrahmawati@unsyiah.ac.id., mirzatab@unsyiah.ac.id.

Economy and Business Faculty, Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh

**Abstract.** This paper investigates career resilience and success factors during the Covid-19 pandemic. A qualitative approach through the semi-structured interview was used to achieve the objectives. Data was gathered from 20 informants who worked in various fields in Aceh. The study results show that personal resources, such as human capital, spiritual capital, positive psychological capital, and social capital, were the predictors of an individual's career resilience and success during the Covid-19 pandemic in Aceh. We hope these results will inspire scholars and practitioners to understand the career implications of the Covid-19 pandemic and support employees to develop their resources in dealing with its consequences.

**Keywords:** career resilience; career success; personal resources, covid-19 pandemic.

## 1 Introduction

After two years since it was first discovered in Wuhan, the Covid-19 Pandemic has not shown any signs of ending. Various efforts continue to be optimized by the government to reduce the impact of this pandemic, both in the health and economic sectors. Various policies in the health sector, such as vaccination and the Implementation of Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM), Learning from Home, Working from Home, and other various policies, continue to be accelerated. Likewise, fiscal stimulus packages continue to be a key factor in accelerating the recovery process in the economic sphere. However, these efforts have not been optimal in recovering health and economic conditions. Even in the economic sphere, the impact of the pandemic on employment and working hours lost was worse than previously thought.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) [1] stated that global working hours in 2021 will be 4.3 percent below pre-pandemic achievements (the fourth quarter of 2019), equivalent to 125 million full-time jobs. In 2021, McKinsey's research found that more than 25 percent of workers need to switch jobs before the pandemic to maintain and succeed in their careers. Before the pandemic, job losses were concentrated only in middle-form jobs in manufacturing and some office jobs due to automation, in addition to low- and high-wage jobs continuing to grow. Almost all low-wage workers who lose their jobs can move to other low-wage jobs, such as data entry workers can move to healthcare, retail, or home workers. However, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on low-wage jobs, almost all the growth in labor demand will occur in high-wage jobs. So that in the future, more than half of the unemployed low-wage workers will need to switch to jobs in higher wage groups and, of course, require different skills and know how to stay employed [2].

In Indonesia, this global phenomenon does not only occur in the main economic growth centers, such as provinces on the island of Java but also has an impact on provinces far from the center of national economic growth, such as Aceh. Aceh is a special region with a large budget and fiscal stimulus. In 2021, Aceh's Expenditure Budget (APBA) reached 17.07 trillion (Qanun Aceh, Number 1 of 2021). However, the impact of the pandemic has made this large budget has not had a major impact on improving the quality of employability and the welfare of the community. Statistics of Aceh Province (BPS) [3] show that the Open Unemployment Rate until December 5, 2021, reached 6.3%, with Aceh's economic growth rate of 2.56%, which makes Aceh the province with the lowest economic growth rate in Sumatera. These various contextual facts show that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic disruption on an individual's employability, career sustainability, and success will be long-term. Therefore, an individual needs to present and shift the conversation about the future of his work to the present [4], [5] and emphasize the need for a long-term perspective in developing strategies that create self-resilience to be able to adapt in the face of future crises, and gain success in work and career.

How can an individual adapt and continue his career to achieve career resilience and success during the Covid-19 pandemic? What resources do they need to maintain resiliency and achieve career success during the Covid-19 pandemic? Based on the Conservation of Resources (COR) perspective [6], this study aims to identify the resources needed for individuals to maintain their careers to achieve career success during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1. Conservation of Resources Theory

This research uses the COR Theory to understand this research phenomenon holistically. This theory helps explain how careers are maintained and how an individual's resources affect their resilience and career success [7], [8], [9]. Individuals will be more resilient and successful in work and careers when they have a lot of personal resources and are more attached to their work. These personal resources are various elements linked to a person's resilience and determine their ability to control and influence their environment [6] successfully. For this reason, everyone will work to build and preserve their physical and psychological resources and prevent the loss of those resources. These personal resources will make an individual more resilient in dealing with various events or incidents in the workplace, help reduce fatigue and tension, be able to overcome various discriminations in the workplace, and complete various tasks that have been set [9], including in dealing with difficult situations caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

## **2.2. Career Resilience During the Covid-19 Pandemic**

Resilience is important for an individual's effectiveness and work [9], [10]. Resilience is generally defined as an individual's ability to become strong, healthy, and prosperous after facing a bad event or situation [9]. Meanwhile, career resilience is also defined as the persistence component of career motivation and is characterized by a strong ability to adjust to a changing environment and cope with adverse circumstances [11]. With their high persistence and adaptability, individuals who possess resilient careers are better equipped to overcome career obstacles and disruptions. At work, resilient individuals can bounce back from an adverse event and take advantage of the situation into something beneficial for personal growth and development, both in the work and non-work domains [9]. Therefore, adapting and surviving in facing disruption or adversity is essential in maintaining a career in today's Covid-19 pandemic era [4]. Individuals are forced to be resilient in life, including at work.

Career resilience is an essential survival skill in the 21st century [10]. The skills naturally come from the increasing of uncertain changes. The contextual factors affecting the changes include the alters in work and the workforce, the increase in job insecurity due to the organizational restructuring, job intensification, and the increased use of the latest technology in the value chain of business activities because of the industrial revolution 4.0 [9], [10], [12]. As a result, resilience is highly needed in the current state of the Covid-19 pandemic [13], [4].

## **2.3. Career Success During the Covid-19 Pandemic**

Career sustainability and success have become important issues in recent years due to changes in several contextual factors, such as increasing job insecurity, job intensification, and the increasing use of the latest technology in business value chain activities because of the industrial revolution 4.0 [9], [12]. These various contextual conditions have impacted changing the needs of the skills and competencies that individuals must possess and how work is completed. This condition is further aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic that is currently happening. Almost every day, we hear stories about how individuals are required to be able to show resilience, sustainability, and success in their careers due to this pandemic. To that end, the researchers recognize the importance of an individual's ability to adapt when facing difficulty in a career, especially in the current turbulent environmental conditions [9], [4], [10].

Career sustainability and success are related to time, social space, agency, and meaning [4]. Career sustainability and success cover the entire life span of an individual, considering his past, investing in the present, and innovating for the future, including all paid and unpaid work they have done. Individuals must recognize each intersection well in their lives, including their social, work, and family conditions, as well as accommodate the fundamental needs of those elements. These conditions will guide career decisions made by everyone to appreciate the meaning, values, and abilities they have [14], [15]. Therefore, the key to career sustainability and success is recognized and shared responsibility between individuals and organizations to strengthen each other. Individuals and organizations jointly build an ecosystem that prioritizes recognition of the importance of interconnectivity between all elements of the organization and the larger community in which we live and work so that it will strengthen the relationship between work and social conditions and family life as a unit [4]. These conditions and experiences in facing every problem and difficulty together will greatly help individuals and organizations view and treat work in the future.

Furthermore, the key element in building career sustainability and success during the Covid-19 pandemic is how an individual learns from experience in facing various life challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic to apply the knowledge gained sustainably [4]. For this reason, everyone must continue to be in a state of continuous learning, innovation, and adaptation to continue building the competencies necessary for the sustainability of his career and to successfully get through the crisis caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic [16], [5]. Meanwhile, [17] emphasizes the importance of an individual's ability to understand the complex contextual conditions that will greatly influence their career decision-making process [17]. Under these conditions, individuals must make career choices based on how they prioritize their needs concerning the needs of their community and organization, and those priorities may vary according to the phase of a person's career, and his choices may change as his career phase changes.

For this reason, organizations must continue to invest in retaining employee talent and cultivate a sustainability and success-oriented culture to help their human resources stay engaged and develop over time [17]. It will help the institution retain individuals with high adaptive abilities with the mental and spiritual power to continue contributing to maintaining the organization's competitive advantage. The ability of the individual to accumulate and strengthen their resources, knowledge, experience, and support from supervisors and the rest of the organizational elements, and to constantly demonstrate excellent performance and engage with the institution, will determine an individual's career sustainability and success during and after Covid-19 Pandemic.

#### **2.4. Personal Resources, Career Resilience, and Career Success During the Covid-19 Pandemic**

Many previous researchers identified the personal and contextual factors as a predictor of an individual's career resilience and success. These personal factors include an individual's traits, expertise, attitudes, and behaviors. Comparatively, contextual factors are related to a supportive workplace and supportive work and family characteristics. This study argues that these personal and contextual factors will determine their ability to survive difficult career situations and not be considered a vulnerable individuals by the company. These various personal resources will become risk factors and protectors in determining the sustainability and success of an individual's career [18]. When an individual experiences a shortage of resources, for example, material, human capital, social support, etc., it will put them at risk, reducing their ability to sustain and succeed in their career. On the contrary, when a person has protective resources, such as strong social support and a diversity of expertise, it will positively affect the sustainability and success of his career during the Covid-19 pandemic [4].

### **3 Research Method**

We adopted a qualitative research design to explore the importance of personal resources for resiliency, sustainability, and career success during the Covid-19 pandemic. The qualitative approach fit well with the design of this study because the intent was to explore multiple perspectives on the theme related to personal resources, career resiliency, and career success that emerged from the qualitative analysis. We conducted a semi-structured interview to collect data from 20 informants working in manufacturing, services, public services, health, banking, trade, technology, and telecommunications, that chose purposively. The semi-structured was chosen because this technique offers a focused structure for discussion, but not in too strict ways [19]. This situation will allow informants to discuss their views on all issues in more detail to provide sufficient information to answer the problems and objectives of this study. The results of the interviews are then documented. The transcripts are then identified and explained for each concept identified in detail and finally provide the meaning, benefits, and relationships between these various concepts [20], [21].

### **4 Result and Discussion**

The content analysis [22] of the 20 interview transcripts shows that there are four personal resources that an individual must have to survive and succeed in their career during the Covid-19 pandemic. The four personal resources are human capital, social capital, spiritual capital, and positive psychological capital. Following what was conveyed by informant 1, who said that:

“To be ready to face an era that is developing very quickly and irregularly as in this Covid 19 pandemic, a person's career success is 80% determined by the intangible aspects in them, such as spirituality, social relationships, not giving up easily, being optimistic, focusing on goals, Etc., in addition to also the cognitive aspects that they continue to develop.”

The same was also conveyed by informant 7, who said that:

“The learning process must be carried out to equip and strengthen the resources owned by individuals. A person can succeed in their career because of several things integrated with them, such as *attitude* and behavior, *knowledge* and skills, and hard work.”

In line with the views of informants 1 and 7, informant 15 said:

“Building a sense of responsibility, shaping attitudes and behaviors, having empathy and contextual sensitivity, having communication skills and the ability to work well together, are important capitals for their success and work and career.”

The same was said by informant 20, who said:

“In addition to intellectuality and having the latest knowledge and expertise in the field of work, attitudes and behaviors, hard work, spirituality, and human relations are very important in determining a person's success in their work and career during this Covid 19 pandemic. Especially in the field of work related to services and hospitality.”

The views of these informants show that to survive and succeed in a career, the individual must have excellent human capital. Human capital is a stock of knowledge, expertise, abilities, and other characteristics, which become the source and ability to help themselves achieve their goals and perform satisfactorily. The characteristics of the work environment during the Covid-19 pandemic are uncertain with various changes and

challenges in the fields of health, economy, social, technical, Etc., which have forced individuals to continue learning to strengthen their human capital so that they do not become vulnerable individuals. Individuals continue to identify and strengthen their competencies to compete and succeed in careers. In addition, the strengthening of various elements of human capital is carried out to prevent talent gaps or skill-biased so that they cannot meet job needs due to technical changes caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. This condition is also following the views of Ahmad et al. argue that an individual with a high career resilience and success focuses more on a continuous learning process to upgrade his resources, such as human capital, to adapt and compete in a constantly changing environment [23]. Following [23], [24] argues the importance of human capital as a resource that helps individuals achieve goals satisfactorily and increase their career resilience and success.

Furthermore, during the Covid-19 pandemic, individuals must continue to build social capital. This social capital is an attitude, ability, and expertise to form social relationships easily, build cooperation, and communicate with others [25]. This social capital allows people to achieve common goals fairly within their social interactions. Individuals with high social capital will receive social support from friends, family, colleagues, and other online communities. The support may help them continue learning and optimizing every career opportunity. This concept follows the research conducted by [26], saying that their social capital and social networks largely determine an individual's career resilience and success. This social capital does not only provide social and emotional support to an individual when facing career shock but also to the network and contacts he has.

In addition, the ownership of social capital will make a person more valuable or vice versa for the company. A person's value to the company will increase when they foster and have relationships and access with parties who have knowledge and information that is valuable to the company. Individuals with high social capital are also offered opportunities to increase human capital or other resources, such as skills improvement, self-reputation, and learning opportunities. This situation provides excellent access to increase job performance, career resilience, and success [24].

The result shows that during the Covid-19 pandemic, individuals must also have spiritual. Spirituality encompasses various concepts and values such as transcendent, altruism, meaning in life, and living with a deep connection to the universe and God, which gives strength and wisdom that goes beyond aspects of earthly life [27]. This spiritual capital is essential because it helps people find the deepest and purest resources within themselves and cause the individual to consciously submit to whatever the true effort, allowing him to develop himself holistically. These resources then become internal strengths that encourage the presence of strong aspirations to act and practice various policies in ways that benefit oneself and others. Thus, when a person has spiritual capital, he can behave with wisdom and full of meaning in togetherness. Having spiritual capital will reduce unethical behavior in the workplace, such as lack of ethics, cheating, lack of sincerity, fraud, dishonesty, and low efficiency. This situation will implicate more effective achievements for their career resilience and success.

Finally, the results of this study also show the importance of positive psychological capital for individuals to survive and succeed in their careers during the covid-19 pandemic. Positive psychological capital is an individual psychological state that reflects the individual's cognitive, behavioral, and emotional sources to respond to the challenging situation [28]. Positive psychological capital, with its various dimensions such as hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism, creates personal resources for an individual to maintain his performance in conditions where job demands are getting higher, which requires resources and more sustainable energy within him. In this situation, positive psychological capital becomes an intrinsic resource that triggers individuals to increase motivation for achievement, maintain work spirit, and regulate attitudes and behaviors, which are an important part of an individual's career resilience and success system, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, this spiritual and positive psychological capital greatly assists individuals in coping with the stress and burnout they face in uncertain conditions and career shock caused by the Covid-19 pandemic [10], [4]. Various findings and discussions in the research model as shown in figure 1.

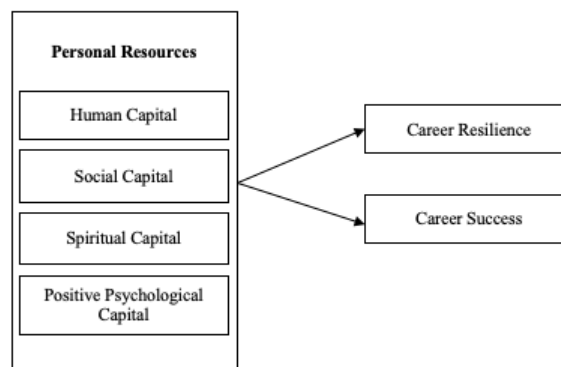


Figure 1. Proposed Research Model

## 5 Conclusion

Based on Conservation of Resources Perspectives, the results of this study empirically proved that having personal resources, such as human capital, spiritual capital, positive psychological capital, and social capital, helps individuals increase their career resilience and success during the Covid-19 Pandemic. For this reason, individuals should strengthen their self-defense systems and coping mechanisms through spiritual and positive psychological capital in facing various work challenges and the uncertainties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, individuals must also develop skills and another element of human capital related to their work and have a strong social support base, which will greatly assist them in dealing with any career shocks due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, organizations must also provide support and opportunities to help individuals increase the accumulation of personal resources. As a result, those resources alleviate resilience in a person to manage any career shock he faces and turns it into something beneficial to his life, career sustainability, and success in the future.

## References

- [1] [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_824098/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_824098/lang--en/index.htm), Retrieved December 1, 2021
- [2] <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/the-future-of-work-after-covid-19>, Retrieved December 1, 2021
- [3] <https://aceh.bps.go.id>, Retrieved December 1, 2021
- [4] Hite, L.M. & McDonald, K.S: Careers after COVID-19: challenges and changes. *Human Resource Development International*. Vol 23(4), pp. 427-437. (2020).
- [5] Lund, S., K. Ellingrud, B. Hancock, & J. Manyika: COVID-19 and Jobs: Monitoring the US Impact on People and Places. McKinsey Global Institute website. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-jobs-monitoring-the-us-impact-on-people-and-places>. (2020)
- [6] Hobfoll, S. E.: Conservation of Resources: A New Attempt at Conceptualizing Stress. *American Psychologist*. Vol 44 (3), pp. 513–524. (1989).
- [7] Akkermans, J., S. E. Seibert, & S. T. Mol.: Tales of the Unexpected: Integrating Career Shocks in the Contemporary Careers Literature. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*. Vol 44. (2018).
- [8] De Vos, A., B. I. J. M. Van der Heijden, and J. Akkermans.: Sustainable Careers: Towards a Conceptual Model. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. Vol. 117. (2020).
- [9] Kossek, E. E. & M. B. Perrigino: Resilience: A Review Using a Grounded Integrated Occupational Approach. *The Academy of Management Annals*. Vol. 10 (1), pp. 729–797. (2016).
- [10] Mishra, P., & K. McDonald: Career Resilience: An Integrated Review of the Empirical Literature. *Human Resource Development Review*. Vol. 16, pp. 207–234. (2017).
- [11] Noe, R. A., Noe, A. W., & Bachhuber, J. A.: An investigation of the correlates of career motivation. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. Vol. 37, pp. 340-356. (1990).
- [12] Rahmawati, S. & Fairuzabadi: Human Resources Development Model for the Industrial Revolution 4.0 Era in Aceh, Indonesia. 33<sup>rd</sup> EBES Conference Proceedings, Vol.1, pp. 601-619. (2020).
- [13] Akkermans, J., J. Richardson, & M. Kraimer: The COVID-19 Crisis as a Career Shock: Implications for Careers and Vocational Behaviors. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. Vol 119. (2020).
- [14] Lawrence, B. S., D. T. Hall, & M. B. Arthur: Sustainable Careers Then and Now. In *Handbook of Research on Sustainable Careers*, edited by A. DeVos and B. I. J. M. Van der Heijden. pp. 432–449. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar. (2017).
- [15] Van der Heijden, B. I. J. M., & A. DeVos: Sustainable Careers: Introductory Chapter.” In *Handbook of Research on Sustainable Careers*, edited by A. DeVos and B. I. J. M. Van der Heijden. pp. 1–19. Cheltenham, Glos, UK: Edward Elgar. (2017).
- [16] Heslin, P. A., L. A. Keating, & S. J. Ashford: How Being in Learning Mode May Enable a Sustainable Career across the Lifespan. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. Vol. 117. (2020).
- [17] Chudzikowski, K., S. Gustafsson, & S. Tams: Constructing Alignment for Sustainable Careers: Insights from the Career Narratives of Management Consultants. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. Vol. 117. (2020).
- [18] Rochat, S., J. Masdonati, & J. P. Dauwalder: Determining Career Resilience. In *Psychology of Career Adaptability, Employability, and Resilience*, edited by K. Maree. pp. 125–141. Cham, Switzerland: Springer. (2017).
- [19] Low, S. P., Gao, S., & Ng, E. W. L.: Future-ready project and facility management graduates in Singapore for industry 4.0: Transforming mindsets and competencies. *Engineering, Construction, and Architectural Management*. Vol. 28(1), pp. 270–290. (2021).
- [20] Neuman, W. L.: *Basics of Social Research: Qualitative & Quantitative Approach*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education Limited. (2014).
- [21] Lune, H. & Berg B. L.: *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education Limited. (2017).
- [22] Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E.: Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, Vol. 15(9), pp. 1277-1288. (2005).
- [23] Ahmed, A. Arshad, M.A. Mahmood, A., & Akhtar, S.: The influence of spiritual values on employee’s helping behavior: the moderating role of Islamic work ethic. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*. (2019).

- [24] Jarlstrom, M., Brandt, T., & Rajala, A.: The relationship between career capital and career success among Finnish knowledge workers. *Baltic Journal of Management*. Vol. 15(5), pp. 687–706. (2020).
- [25] Hecklau, F., Galeitzke, M., Flachs, S., & Kohl, H.: Holistic Approach for Human Resource Management in Industry 4.0. *Procedia CIRP*. Vol. 54, pp. 1–6. (2016).
- [26] Mansfield, C.F., Beltman, S., Broadley, T., & Weatherby-Fell, N.: Building resilience in teacher education: An evidenced informed framework. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. Vol. 54, pp. 77-87. (2016).
- [27] Akhtar, S., Arshad, M. A., Mahmood, A., & Ahmed, A.: Gaining recognition of Islamic spiritual intelligence for organisational sustainability. *International Journal of Ethics and Systems*. Vol. 34(1), pp. 70–77. (2018).
- [28] Luthans, B. C., Luthans, K. W., & Avey, J. B.: Building the Leaders of Tomorrow: The Development of Academic Psychological Capital. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*. Vol. 21(2), pp. 191–199. (2014).