



# Self-Efficacy, Resilience, and Optimism: Cultivating a Culture of Confidence among Employees in Abuja, Nigeria

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## Abstract

This study explores how self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism interact to build a culture of confidence among employees in Abuja, Nigeria. Drawing on a qualitative phenomenological design, the research investigates employees' lived experiences of these psychological resources in diverse organizational contexts. Twenty-two in-depth interviews and nine reflective journals provided rich insights into how individuals perceive and enact confidence in environments marked by economic volatility and cultural complexity. Thematic analysis revealed that self-efficacy acts as a foundation for proactive behavior, enabling employees to take initiative despite limited resources or ambiguous expectations. Resilience emerged as essential for sustaining engagement in the face of setbacks, with communal support and faith-based practices frequently reinforcing adaptive responses. Optimism, often rooted in shared cultural and spiritual beliefs, played a critical role in maintaining motivation and framing challenges as temporary. The interplay of these resources formed an integrated system that employees described as mutually reinforcing, creating a foundation for sustained confidence and performance. The findings highlight the need for culturally relevant interventions that support psychological capital development through leadership practices, training programs, and organizational policies. The study also underscores the importance of recognizing contextual influences, such as collectivist values and infrastructural challenges, that shape how confidence is built and sustained. Recommendations include designing holistic HR initiatives, fostering supportive leadership, and conducting longitudinal research to examine the evolution of confidence over time.

**Keywords:** Self-Efficacy, Resilience, Optimism, Employee Confidence, Psychological Capital, Qualitative Research, Nigerian Workplaces, Organizational Culture, Motivation, Engagement.

## Original Research Article

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Background

Employee confidence has increasingly been recognized as a central element in achieving and sustaining organizational effectiveness. Confident employees are more likely to take initiative, embrace challenges, and persist in the face of setbacks. Their sense of personal agency contributes not only to their individual performance but also to a broader culture of innovation and resilience within organizations (Luthans, Youssef-Morgan, & Avolio, 2015). In contexts characterized by rapid change and uncertainty, cultivating confidence becomes an even more critical strategic priority.

Research over the past two decades has highlighted the role of **positive psychological resources** in shaping employees' beliefs about their capacity to succeed. Among these, **self-efficacy**, **resilience**, and **optimism** have received particular attention. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to organize and execute actions necessary to achieve specific outcomes (Bandura, 1997). Employees with high self-efficacy are more willing to engage in complex tasks, exert sustained effort, and recover from setbacks.

Resilience, often defined as the capacity to bounce back from adversity, helps employees adapt constructively to challenges and maintain their motivation even when facing obstacles (King, Newman, & Luthans, 2016). Optimism, meanwhile, involves the generalized expectation that good things will



happen and that challenges can be overcome with effort and perseverance (Carver & Scheier, 2014). Together, these three psychological resources form the basis of what Luthans and colleagues call **psychological capital**, which has been linked to improved performance, higher engagement, and reduced turnover intentions (Luthans et al., 2015).

While the importance of these constructs has been well established in Western contexts, far less is known about how they operate and interact in African organizational environments. Nigeria's dynamic economic landscape, coupled with unique cultural norms around hierarchy, collectivism, and spirituality, may shape employees' experiences of self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism in ways that differ from established models. For example, research has suggested that communal support systems and faith-based coping strategies can strongly influence resilience in Nigerian workplaces (Ojelabi et al., 2021). Similarly, economic volatility and infrastructural challenges may place distinctive demands on employees' confidence and adaptability.

Abuja, as Nigeria's capital and an emerging hub for government, non-profit, and private sector organizations, provides a particularly relevant setting to explore these dynamics. Understanding how employees in Abuja cultivate and sustain confidence can yield valuable insights for managers and policymakers aiming to foster positive work environments amid complexity and change.

## Problem Statement

Despite the growing emphasis on psychological resources in organizational research, there is **limited qualitative evidence in the Nigerian context** examining how self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism collectively contribute to building a culture of confidence. Most existing studies in sub-Saharan Africa have focused on quantitative measures of employee attitudes or have examined these constructs in isolation (Ugwu et al., 2014). This lack of rich, contextualized understanding constrains both theory development and the design of culturally relevant interventions. To build a more comprehensive picture, it is necessary to explore employees' own narratives about how these resources shape their work experiences and perceptions of confidence.

## Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to **explore employees' lived experiences of self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism** in cultivating a culture of confidence within organizations based in Abuja, Nigeria. By drawing on qualitative interviews and reflective accounts, the research aims to illuminate the meanings employees attach to these psychological resources, how they interact in practice, and the organizational factors that support or undermine them.

## Research Questions

To guide this inquiry, the study will address the following research questions:

1. How do employees perceive the role of self-efficacy in building workplace confidence?

2. In what ways does resilience contribute to sustaining confidence in challenging contexts?
3. How does optimism shape employees' expectations and motivation?
4. What organizational practices support these psychological resources in Abuja?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review provides an overview of theoretical and empirical perspectives on self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism as key psychological resources that contribute to building a culture of confidence. It also examines the interplay between these constructs within the framework of positive psychology and identifies gaps in the Nigerian context that underscore the need for qualitative research.

### Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, a core construct in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1997), refers to individuals' beliefs in their capacity to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce desired outcomes. Bandura argued that self-efficacy beliefs are the foundation of human agency, influencing how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and behave. According to Bandura, these beliefs develop over time through four main sources: mastery experiences (successes and failures), vicarious experiences (observing others), verbal persuasion (encouragement or discouragement), and physiological and affective states (emotions, stress reactions).

Research has consistently demonstrated the relevance of self-efficacy in organizational settings. Employees with high self-efficacy are more likely to take initiative, set challenging goals, persist in the face of adversity, and demonstrate resilience under pressure (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). These behaviors collectively contribute to a sense of confidence that is not merely situational but becomes embedded in organizational culture over time.

For instance, Luthans and Youssef (2007) observed that self-efficacy is a critical component of **psychological capital**, alongside hope, resilience, and optimism. They argued that employees high in self-efficacy tend to interpret difficult tasks as opportunities rather than threats, thereby setting the tone for confident, proactive performance. Meta-analytic evidence supports this claim: a large-scale analysis by Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) found that self-efficacy is a robust predictor of work-related performance across industries and roles.

Within African workplaces, studies such as Olawa and Lawal (2017) have also reported positive associations between self-efficacy and performance outcomes, including job satisfaction and organizational commitment. However, much of this work has used quantitative survey designs and standardized instruments developed in Western contexts. Less is known about how employees in Nigeria subjectively experience and make sense of self-efficacy, especially in dynamic or resource-constrained environments.

### Resilience

Resilience is commonly defined as the capacity to bounce back from adversity, adapt successfully to challenges,



and maintain psychological well-being in the face of stress (Masten, 2014). In organizational research, resilience has evolved from a trait-focused construct to a more dynamic, process-oriented understanding (King, Newman, & Luthans, 2016). Resilience encompasses both the ability to withstand pressure and the capacity to learn and grow from setbacks.

Luthans (2002) emphasized that resilience in the workplace involves not only recovery but also proactive adaptation. Employees high in resilience are more likely to maintain engagement when faced with organizational changes, economic uncertainty, or interpersonal conflict. This adaptability contributes to a culture where challenges are viewed as temporary and surmountable rather than permanent threats.

Conceptual frameworks such as Richardson's Resiliency Model (2002) highlight that resilience emerges through the interaction of protective factors (e.g., social support, self-efficacy, optimism) and risk factors (e.g., chronic stressors, low control). Importantly, resilience is influenced by context: cultural norms, economic conditions, and organizational practices all shape how employees perceive and respond to adversity.

Empirical studies in sub-Saharan Africa, including research by Ojelabi et al. (2021), have shown that resilience is a critical resource in settings characterized by volatility and constrained infrastructure. For example, in Nigeria, employees often rely on communal support networks, religious faith, and cultural practices to sustain their capacity for adaptation. However, while such studies highlight resilience as an important factor, they typically examine it in isolation, without considering how it interacts with other psychological resources like self-efficacy and optimism to foster confidence.

## Optimism

Optimism is broadly defined as a generalized expectation that good things will happen and that challenges can be overcome through effort and perseverance (Carver & Scheier, 2014). Unlike unrealistic or wishful thinking, optimism in the organizational context is adaptive and grounded in reality, often described as "realistic optimism" (Schneider, 2001).

Seligman's (1998) theory of **learned optimism** proposes that individuals can develop a more optimistic explanatory style through cognitive reframing and intentional practice. This perspective has important implications for building cultures of confidence: if optimism can be learned, organizations can design interventions to promote it.

Optimism has been empirically linked to motivation, engagement, and performance. In a meta-analysis, Avey, Reichard, Luthans, and Mhatre (2011) found that optimism is associated with higher job satisfaction, better well-being, and stronger performance. Optimistic employees are more likely to set challenging goals and to persist in pursuing them, even when faced with setbacks.

Moreover, optimism plays a key role in buffering the negative effects of stress. Carver and Scheier (2014) argue that optimistic individuals are more likely to engage in problem-focused coping rather than avoidance or withdrawal. This

proactive stance contributes to collective confidence within teams and departments.

While studies in Western and Asian contexts have explored the antecedents and outcomes of optimism, few studies have investigated how Nigerian employees develop and sustain optimism in the face of systemic challenges such as economic instability, power supply issues, and unpredictable regulatory environments. This gap points to the need for contextualized research capturing local narratives and interpretations of optimism as a workplace resource.

## Interplay Between Resources

Although self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism have often been studied separately, there is growing recognition that these resources are **interrelated and mutually reinforcing**. Hobfoll's (2002) **Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory** provides a useful framework for understanding this interplay. According to COR theory, individuals strive to obtain, retain, and protect resources that are valued not only for their instrumental benefits but also for their symbolic significance. When employees build one resource (e.g., self-efficacy), they are often better positioned to develop others (e.g., resilience and optimism). This accumulation of resources is sometimes described as a "resource caravan."

For example, Bandura (1997) observed that mastery experiences not only enhance self-efficacy but also increase optimism about future challenges. Likewise, resilient responses to adversity can reinforce self-efficacy beliefs and generate more positive expectations. These synergies suggest that developing one psychological resource may have cascading effects that bolster confidence at both individual and organizational levels.

Positive psychology scholars have integrated these insights into the concept of **psychological capital**, which includes self-efficacy, resilience, optimism, and hope (Luthans et al., 2015). Psychological capital is defined as "an individual's positive psychological state of development," characterized by confidence (self-efficacy), perseverance toward goals (hope), positive attribution (optimism), and bouncing back from adversity (resilience). Empirical research shows that psychological capital is strongly correlated with performance, engagement, and well-being across cultures (Avey et al., 2011). However, while these theories offer valuable insights, their applicability in Nigerian workplaces has rarely been explored through in-depth qualitative studies. Given the distinct cultural and economic environment, there is a need to examine how Nigerian employees perceive and combine these resources to create and sustain confidence.

## Gaps in the Nigerian Context

While studies in Europe, North America, and parts of Asia have extensively documented the role of self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism in workplace outcomes, research in Nigeria remains limited in both scope and methodological diversity. The few studies available often rely on cross-sectional surveys using Western-developed instruments, which

may not fully capture the nuances of Nigerian employees' experiences (Ugwu et al., 2014).

Several contextual factors make Nigeria an important setting for further inquiry. First, the country's rapidly changing economy, high youth unemployment, and infrastructural challenges present employees with unique stressors that may shape the development and deployment of psychological resources. Second, Nigeria's collectivist cultural values, strong religious affiliations, and community-oriented coping mechanisms may create distinctive pathways to resilience and optimism that are not captured by conventional models (Ojelabi et al., 2021).

Third, qualitative research is particularly scarce. While quantitative surveys provide valuable statistical associations, they often fail to illuminate how employees interpret and integrate self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism in their daily work lives. Qualitative approaches—such as phenomenological inquiry—can reveal rich, contextualized insights into these processes, allowing researchers and practitioners to design interventions that resonate with employees' lived realities.

Lastly, there is a need to understand how organizations in Nigeria can intentionally cultivate a culture of confidence by supporting the development of these psychological resources. Existing research has seldom examined organizational practices, policies, or leadership behaviors that enable employees to build and sustain self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism over time.

Extensive theoretical and empirical evidence underscores the critical role of self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism in building employee confidence. These resources are interconnected, forming part of a broader psychological capital that supports engagement, motivation, and well-being. However, the lack of qualitative studies in the Nigerian context—especially in dynamic workplaces like those in Abuja—limits our understanding of how employees experience and cultivate these resources. Addressing this gap is essential for developing culturally relevant strategies to foster a sustainable culture of confidence.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative approach to explore employees' lived experiences of self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism as resources for building a culture of confidence in Abuja, Nigeria. A phenomenological design was selected to generate rich, contextualized insights into how individuals interpret and integrate these psychological resources in their everyday work lives.

#### Research Design

A **phenomenological inquiry** was employed to capture the subjective experiences and personal meanings that employees attach to self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism. Phenomenology emphasizes understanding phenomena as they are perceived and described by those who live them (Moustakas, 1994). This approach is well suited for research

questions that seek to uncover nuanced perspectives rather than test pre-defined hypotheses (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Phenomenology also aligns with the study's intention to honor participants' voices and to situate their experiences within their unique cultural and organizational contexts.

#### Context

The study was conducted among organizations located in **Abuja, Nigeria**, the nation's capital and an emerging hub for public administration, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private enterprise. Abuja's diverse economic landscape offers an opportunity to capture varied experiences of workplace confidence across sectors. This context is especially relevant given Nigeria's economic volatility, infrastructural challenges, and cultural values emphasizing community and collective resilience (Ojelabi et al., 2021).

#### Participants

Participants were recruited through **purposeful sampling**, which involves selecting individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2015). The sampling strategy aimed to ensure variation across sectors, organizational levels, and demographics to enrich the data.

A total of **20–25 employees** were targeted, drawn from sectors including public service, NGOs, and private firms. Inclusion criteria were as follows:

- **Minimum of one year of continuous employment** in their current organization, to ensure sufficient familiarity with workplace dynamics and practices.
- **Self-reported experience with confidence-related challenges or growth**, as assessed through a brief screening questionnaire. This criterion ensured that participants could reflect meaningfully on the development of self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism in their professional roles.

Recruitment was facilitated through professional networks, organizational contacts, and direct invitations. The final sample size was determined by the principle of **data saturation**, whereby additional interviews did not yield substantially new insights (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

#### Data Collection Methods

##### Semi-Structured In-Depth Interviews

The primary data collection method consisted of **semi-structured interviews** lasting approximately 60–90 minutes each. This approach provided consistency across participants while allowing flexibility to probe emergent themes and follow up on individual stories (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

Interviews were conducted in English, which is widely used in professional contexts in Nigeria, and were audio-recorded with participants' consent. Where necessary, clarifications were





provided in Nigerian Pidgin to ensure comprehension and comfort.

## Reflective Journals

To complement the interviews, participants were invited to maintain **reflective journals** over a four-week period. The journals allowed participants to document real-time reflections on how self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism influenced their daily work experiences. This method supported **methodological triangulation**, adding depth to the dataset and capturing temporal aspects of participants' experiences. Participation in the journaling component was voluntary. Those who contributed journals were encouraged to submit entries weekly, focusing on specific incidents that tested or reinforced their confidence.

## Interview Protocol

The interview protocol was designed to elicit detailed narratives about the interplay between psychological resources and confidence. Key topics included:

1. **Perceptions of Self-Efficacy**
  - a. Examples of situations where participants felt confident in their abilities.
  - b. Factors that strengthened or undermined their self-efficacy.
2. **Examples of Resilience**
  - a. Experiences of overcoming setbacks, failures, or organizational challenges.
  - b. Strategies used to adapt and recover.
3. **Experiences of Optimism**
  - a. How participants maintained a positive outlook in the face of adversity.
  - b. Role of optimism in sustaining motivation.
4. **Organizational Influences**
  - a. Practices, policies, or leadership behaviors that supported or hindered the development of these resources.
  - b. Cultural and contextual factors shaping confidence in Abuja workplaces.

Follow-up probes and clarifying questions were used to ensure depth and richness of responses. The interview guide was pilot-tested with two employees to refine question wording and flow.

## Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using **thematic analysis**, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach:

1. **Familiarization**
  - Transcripts and journals were read multiple times to immerse the researchers in the data.
2. **Initial Coding**
  - Codes were generated systematically across the dataset to capture salient features relevant to the research questions.

## 3. Searching for Themes

- Codes were grouped into broader themes reflecting patterns across participants.

## 4. Reviewing Themes

- Themes were refined through iterative comparison with raw data to ensure coherence and distinctiveness.

## 5. Defining and Naming Themes

- Clear definitions and labels were developed for each theme, with attention to the cultural context.

## 6. Producing the Report

- Thematic narratives were drafted, supported by illustrative quotations.

All data were managed and coded using **NVivo 12** qualitative analysis software. To enhance **credibility**, two researchers independently coded a subset of transcripts and discussed discrepancies until consensus was reached.

**Member checking** was conducted by sharing preliminary findings with a subset of participants, who were invited to comment on the accuracy and resonance of the interpretations.

### Ethical Considerations

The study was guided by ethical principles of **respect, beneficence, and justice** (British Psychological Society, 2014). Specific measures included:

### • Informed Consent

- Participants received detailed information sheets describing the purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature of the study.
- Written consent was obtained before participation.

### • Confidentiality and Anonymity

- All identifying information was removed from transcripts and reports.
- Pseudonyms were used in all publications and presentations.

### • Culturally Appropriate Procedures

- The research team consulted with local advisors to ensure that consent processes and data collection practices were culturally sensitive.
- Participants were given the option to withdraw at any point without penalty.

All data were stored securely on password-protected devices and backed up on encrypted drives. Ethical approval was



obtained from the relevant institutional review board prior to data collection.

## 4. FINDINGS

The analysis of 22 in-depth interviews and 9 reflective journals revealed four overarching themes related to how self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism contribute to building a culture of confidence among employees in Abuja, Nigeria. These themes illustrate how individual psychological resources interact with contextual factors to shape employees' experiences of confidence and motivation.

### Theme 1: Stories of Self-Efficacy Driving Initiative

Across nearly all participants, self-efficacy emerged as a catalyst for taking initiative, particularly in situations marked by limited resources or ambiguity. Employees described how confidence in their own competence empowered them to act decisively, even when formal structures were lacking.

A project officer in a local NGO explained:

*"There are times when we don't have clear guidelines from management, but I trust my skills to figure things out. That belief pushes me to take ownership instead of waiting for instructions."*

Similarly, a mid-level administrator in the public sector described how self-efficacy helped him manage multiple responsibilities:

*"If I didn't have confidence in my abilities, I would be overwhelmed. But when I know I can deliver, I'm more proactive."*

These accounts highlight that **self-efficacy was not only about feeling capable but about translating that belief into concrete action**. For many employees, self-efficacy set the tone for others and contributed to a shared expectation that challenges could be addressed through personal initiative.

### Theme 2: Narratives of Resilience in Overcoming Economic and Organizational Challenges

Participants frequently shared experiences of navigating setbacks, resource shortages, and systemic inefficiencies. Resilience was consistently described as essential for sustaining engagement and confidence in these conditions.

One participant, a financial officer in a private firm, noted:

*"When salaries were delayed for three months, I had to find ways to cope and still do my job. Resilience, for me, was not giving up or letting frustration take over."*

Others pointed to collective forms of resilience, such as support from colleagues and religious faith:

*"We encourage each other when things are tough. My team is like family, and that makes it easier to bounce back."* (Operations supervisor, public agency)

These narratives reinforce the idea that **resilience was both an individual and a communal phenomenon**, with cultural values of solidarity and faith playing a crucial role. Participants described resilience not as an abstract concept but as an everyday practice of adapting, reframing, and persisting.

### Theme 3: The Role of Optimism in Sustaining Motivation

Optimism emerged as a psychological resource that enabled employees to maintain motivation despite adversity. Participants consistently described optimism as a mindset that shaped their expectations and protected them from disengagement.

A human resources manager in a development organization reflected:

*"I choose to see setbacks as temporary. That mindset keeps me going because I believe things will improve."*

Some participants connected optimism to spiritual beliefs, emphasizing the importance of faith in creating hope for the future:

*"I always tell myself that God has better plans. That helps me stay positive even when targets are not met."* (Sales executive, private sector)

These findings suggest that **optimism was not naive or passive**, but rather an intentional orientation toward possibility. It helped employees frame challenges as opportunities for growth and sustained their drive to contribute, even when circumstances were uncertain.

### Theme 4: Cultural and Contextual Factors in Abuja Shaping Experiences

Participants emphasized that the broader context of Abuja shaped how they experienced and enacted self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism. Economic instability, infrastructural challenges, and bureaucratic inefficiencies were frequently mentioned as sources of stress.

At the same time, employees highlighted cultural norms—such as respect for hierarchy, collectivist values, and religious faith—as resources that supported their confidence:

*"In our culture, you learn to rely on others. We share problems, and that makes it easier to stay confident."* (Program coordinator, NGO)

Another participant noted:

*"I think working in Abuja teaches you to be adaptable. Things change all the time, so you have to believe in yourself and stay hopeful."* (Policy analyst, public sector)

These insights illustrate that **cultural context played a dual role**: it presented unique challenges and offered shared frameworks for coping and sustaining confidence.

Illustrative Quotations

The table below summarizes selected quotations aligned with each theme:

| Theme                               | Illustrative Quotations  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Self-Efficacy Driving Initiative    | "I trust my skills to figure things out. That belief pushes me to take ownership." (NGO Project Officer) |
|                                     | "When I know I can deliver, I'm more proactive." (Public Sector Administrator)                           |
| Resilience in Overcoming Challenges | "Resilience, for me, was not giving up or letting frustration take over." (Finance Officer)              |
|                                     | "We encourage each other. My team is like family." (Operations Supervisor)                               |
| Optimism Sustaining Motivation      | "I choose to see setbacks as temporary." (HR Manager)  |
|                                     | "God has better plans. That helps me stay positive." (Sales Executive)                                   |
| Cultural and Contextual Factors     | "In our culture, you learn to rely on others." (Program Coordinator)                                     |
|                                     | "You have to believe in yourself and stay hopeful." (Policy Analyst)                                     |

Patterns across Sectors and Demographics

Several patterns emerged when comparing experiences across sectors and demographics:

- Sector Differences:** Employees in NGOs and development organizations emphasized the role of optimism more strongly, often linked to mission-driven work. Public sector participants highlighted resilience in navigating bureaucratic challenges, while private sector employees focused on self-efficacy as essential for meeting performance targets.
- Experience Level:** More experienced employees (10+ years) described a more integrated perspective on psychological resources, noting how self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism reinforced each other over time. Newer employees tended to focus on self-efficacy as the primary resource.
- Gender:** Women were more likely to mention communal sources of resilience, such as peer support and faith-based networks, while men more frequently emphasized personal determination and individual coping strategies.
- Role Seniority:** Senior managers described a responsibility to model confidence and optimism for their teams, indicating that leadership plays a key role in reinforcing a culture of confidence.

Summary of Findings

Overall, these findings reveal that self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism are deeply intertwined in employees' experiences of confidence. These resources were not viewed in isolation but as mutually reinforcing capabilities shaped by cultural norms, organizational practices, and collective coping strategies unique to Abuja.

5. DISCUSSION

This section interprets the study's findings, situates them within the broader literature, explores their practical significance, and outlines limitations and recommendations for future research.

Interpretation

The findings suggest that **self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism do not operate in isolation but form an interconnected set of psychological resources that collectively foster a culture of confidence** among employees in Abuja. Self-efficacy emerged as the foundation for proactive behaviors—participants described it as the internal conviction that “I can do this,” which empowered them to initiate action despite ambiguous expectations or limited resources. Resilience complemented self-efficacy by providing the capacity to adapt when setbacks occurred, while optimism sustained motivation and protected against the erosion of confidence over time. This synergy aligns with the concept of **psychological capital**, which frames these resources as mutually reinforcing (Luthans, Youssef-Morgan, & Avolio, 2015). As in global research, participants described how believing in their capabilities (self-efficacy) and expecting positive outcomes (optimism) contributed to their resilience in the face of adversity (Avey et al., 2011). However, the study also revealed **distinctive contextual dynamics**. For example, cultural norms around communal support and religious faith strongly shaped how employees cultivated resilience and optimism. This dimension is less pronounced in Western literature, which tends to emphasize individual agency over collective coping strategies (Carver & Scheier, 2014). Furthermore, while optimism has often been conceptualized in psychological research as an individual trait, this study found that many employees in Abuja grounded their optimism in

shared beliefs and collective narratives. Expressions such as “we encourage each other” and “God has better plans” point to a communal orientation that reflects Nigeria’s collectivist cultural values. This suggests that in the Nigerian context, optimism may be more relationally anchored, which **diverges from the more individualistic framing common in European and North American studies** (Seligman, 1998).

## Implications for Practice

These insights have several practical implications for HR professionals, organizational leaders, and policymakers aiming to cultivate a culture of confidence in Abuja and similar contexts.

### 1. Designing HR Initiatives to Strengthen Self-Efficacy, Resilience, and Optimism

Training and development programs should be designed to address all three resources holistically rather than focusing on self-efficacy alone. Examples of effective interventions could include:

- i. **Mastery Experiences:** Structured opportunities for employees to set and achieve challenging goals, reinforcing their self-efficacy through success.
- ii. **Resilience Workshops:** Training that helps employees normalize setbacks and develop adaptive coping strategies.
- iii. **Optimism Training:** Incorporating principles of learned optimism (Seligman, 1998), such as cognitive reframing techniques and positive attributional styles.

Given the importance of communal support, HR initiatives should also emphasize **peer mentoring, team building, and collective recognition practices** that draw on Nigeria’s collectivist values.

## 2. Recommendations for Leadership and Policy in Abuja

Leaders play a critical role in modeling and reinforcing confidence. Managers can support a culture of confidence by:

- i. **Providing clear expectations and feedback**, which helps employees develop mastery and self-efficacy.
- ii. **Recognizing efforts and progress**, not only outcomes, to sustain optimism and motivation.
- iii. **Creating psychologically safe environments** where employees feel encouraged to share setbacks and seek support.
- iv. **Leveraging cultural strengths**, such as respect for elders and communal solidarity, to design initiatives that feel authentic and locally relevant.

Policymakers and organizational leaders in Abuja can further institutionalize these practices by embedding them in performance management systems, leadership development pipelines, and organizational values statements.

## Limitations

While this study offers valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations.

### 1. Transferability Due to Sample and Context

The findings are based on a purposive sample of employees working in Abuja, which, while diverse in sector representation, may not capture the full range of experiences across Nigeria. For example, employees in Lagos or Port Harcourt may face different economic pressures, sectoral demands, or cultural dynamics. As such, **the transferability of the findings beyond Abuja should be approached with caution.**

### 2. Potential Self-Report Bias

Data relied primarily on **self-reported narratives**, which are subject to recall bias and social desirability bias. While the use of reflective journals and member checking helped mitigate this risk, some participants may have presented their experiences in ways that conformed to socially acceptable norms or organizational expectations.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore how self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism combine to foster a culture of confidence among employees in Abuja, Nigeria. Through in-depth interviews and reflective journals, the research illuminated the ways these psychological resources interact to shape perceptions, behaviors, and motivations in organizational life.

## Summary of Key Findings

The findings revealed that **self-efficacy serves as the foundation for proactive behavior**, empowering employees to take initiative even in the face of uncertainty. **Resilience emerged as a critical capacity** for navigating setbacks and sustaining commitment when confronted with economic or organizational challenges. **Optimism played a central role** in maintaining motivation, enabling employees to frame obstacles as temporary and surmountable rather than insurmountable barriers. Importantly, these resources did not operate in isolation. Instead, they functioned as an integrated system, mutually reinforcing one another and shaped by distinctive cultural and contextual influences—including communal support structures and faith-based perspectives.

The study highlights the **strategic importance of investing in positive psychological resources to build both individual and organizational resilience**. In the Nigerian context—where employees often face systemic constraints, infrastructural limitations, and volatile economic conditions—developing self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism is not simply a desirable



addition to HR practices; it is a critical necessity for organizational sustainability.

Organizations in Abuja, and Nigeria more broadly, stand to benefit by designing development programs and leadership practices that nurture these capabilities in culturally relevant ways. By doing so, they can foster environments where employees feel confident, hopeful, and equipped to meet challenges with creativity and persistence. Ultimately, such investment in human potential is essential for creating resilient organizations that thrive amid complexity and change.

## Recommendations for Future Research

This study points to several promising avenues for further inquiry:

### 1. Comparative Studies across Nigerian Cities or Sectors

Future research could conduct comparative qualitative studies in different regions (e.g., Lagos, Port Harcourt) or sectors (e.g., manufacturing, education, health) to explore how contextual variations shape the interplay of self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism.

### 2. Longitudinal Designs to Track Development over Time

Longitudinal qualitative studies could provide insights into how these psychological resources evolve over time—especially during significant organizational changes such as restructurings, leadership transitions, or economic disruptions. Tracking employees over months or years would deepen understanding of **how confidence is built, sustained, or eroded**.

### 3. Intervention Studies

Experimental or quasi-experimental research could assess the impact of targeted interventions (e.g., optimism training, resilience workshops) on employee confidence, engagement, and performance. Such studies would generate evidence-based recommendations for HR practices.

### 4. Exploring Leadership Dynamics

Given the role of leadership identified in this study, future work could focus on **leaders' own experiences of psychological resources** and how they model or transfer these to their teams.

Overall, this study highlights that self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism are essential, intertwined resources that underpin a culture of confidence. While the core mechanisms align with international research, the cultural and economic realities of Abuja create distinctive pathways through which these resources are developed and expressed. Organizations that understand and leverage these dynamics are more likely to foster workplaces where employees feel capable, hopeful, and ready to thrive.

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