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SENSE OF HUMOUR AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE OF CONTEMPORARY EMPLOYEES

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Purpose: The article presents the topic of the role of humour in the process of creating psychological resilience of people employed in contemporary organizations. The aim of the publication is to show the internal potential of humour in the context of strengthening the psychological resilience of employees.
Design/methodology/approach: The article is based on empirical research conducted among a sample of 400 professionally active individuals. The study employed the Multidimensional Sense of Humour Scale (MSHS) and the Resilience Measurement Scale (SPP-25). Statistical analyses were used to examine relationships between the dimensions of humour and psychological resilience.
Findings: A significant positive correlation was found between the analysed constructs – although the distribution of the strength of the relationship was not uniform and differed depending on the combination of the analysed subscales. The findings show humour as a complex psychological resource that acts as a buffer reducing tension, facilitating the reinterpretation of stressful situations and supporting adaptation to emotional and cognitive demands.
Research limitations/implications: The limitations of the research process include its cross-sectional design and the use of self-report diagnostic instruments.
Practical implications: The article offers insights that may be applied in organizational practice, especially in initiatives aimed at strengthening employee resilience and well-being by integrating humour into approaches that support coping and adaptation.
Originality/value: The article brings a new perspective to research on resilience by integrating humour with reflection on the ability of individuals to cope in dynamic and turbulent times. It highlights the importance of humour as an internal resource contributing to psychological resilience and indicates directions for further research.
Keywords: sense of humour, psychological resilience, employee well-being, human resource management.
Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

The contemporary organizational reality is characterized by unpredictable dynamics of processes affecting the way economic entities function (Brewer et al., 2021), which also directly affect people (cf. Balak, 2025). In the face of the increasing phenomena that destabilize everyday professional life, concern for the psychological well-being of employees is therefore growing (Kelloway et al., 2023).

Given the unpredictability of the environment, there is an increasing need for competences that enable rapid recovery of psychological harmony after crises (Caniëls, Curseu, 2024), which in turn supports the continuity of an economic entity's operations during periods of strong perturbations (Biedenbach et al., 2022). Consequently, employees' psychological resilience should be regarded as a foundation of organizational durability (Aguiar-Quintana et al., 2021).

In the search for ways to maintain employees' psychological peace, increasing attention is being paid to factors that are not only instrumental in nature, but that affect well-being in an indirect way. Humour in the workplace it can act as a shock absorber of emotional tensions (León-Pérez et al., 2021) – especially when it is positive (Basler et al., 2025), supporting a more flexible approach and thereby enhancing psychological resilience (Bhattacharyya et al., 2019).

This article attempts to conceptualize psychological resilience in the professional context, taking into account the role of humour in the organizational environment and placing them in the current socio-economic conditions. The main goal of the publication is to identify the connections between the affective personality disposition, which is the tendency to humour, and the adaptive mechanisms supporting individuals in situations of pressure.

2. Literature review

2.1. Multi-faceted form of humour

The presence of humour is manifested in everyday social exchange, where it can regulate emotions (Kyomugisha, 2025), relieve tensions, and positively influence the quality of interpersonal communication (Beck, 1997, cit. per El-Sayed et al., 2024). Fundamentally, humour enhances positive mood (Szabo, 2003, cited in Martin, Ford, 2018) and facilitates psychological distancing from suffering as well as the reinterpretation of complex experiences, thereby enabling individuals to find lightness even in the face of overwhelming experiences (Nemkova, Ivanova, 2025).

Humour effectively complements the model of operation of economic entities, thus supporting key processes (Yang, Yang, 2023). In the relational model, Cooper (2008, cit. per Rosenberg et al., 2024) describes humour by referring to events intentionally aimed at amusing

another person in a professional context. In turn, Romero and Cruthirds (2006, cit. per Andrade et al., 2017) claim that humour in the workplace includes various messages that employees find funny and that evoke positive emotions. A shared sense of humour builds group solidarity and deepens the bonds between its members (Martin, 2024). Moreover, employees who use humour while fulfilling their professional duties are clearly more relaxed, which ultimately translates into their productivity (Tarvin, 2014).

2.2. Psychological resilience

Resilience is most often considered a relatively durable dispositional trait – a personal resource that enables an accurate response to crisis situations [*resiliency*, psychological resiliency] – or an adaptive process that supports overcoming negative experiences [*resilience*, psychological resilience] (Brewer et al., 2019). From a functional perspective, it is sometimes seen as a primary human response to destabilizing events (Wulandari et al., 2025) or as a protective form that facilitates effective adaptation to difficult conditions (Luthar et al., 2000, cit. per Du et al., 2021).

Resilience allows employees for responding adequately to everyday disruptions (Franken et al., 2019) and "bouncing back" from adversities (Kotzé, Nel, 2013, cit. per Meintjes, Hofmeyr, 2018). Increased levels of psychological resilience are associated with employee engagement (Aggarwal, 2022), which comes to the fore in situations of increased stress (Wiroko, Sugiharti, 2022). Resilient employees have a positive attitude (Chikobvu, Harunavamwe, 2022) and perform better on tasks (Baluszek et al., 2023). Accordingly, resilience becomes one of the foundations of an individual's long-term success in turbulent professional realities (cf. Ibrahim, Hussein, 2024).

2.3. Humour and psychological resilience

A sense of humour is increasingly mentioned among the characteristics of psychologically resilient people (Block, Block, 1980, cit. per Ogińska-Bulik, Juczyński, 2008). People who can respond to disruptions with a joke are less likely to experience anxiety (Gholami et al., 2025), regain a sense of control more effectively (Kaya, Yağan, 2022), and show greater perseverance and readiness to act in unfavourable circumstances (Mahat-Shamir, Kagan, 2022). In addition, humour not only supports psychological resilience (Rapp, Wuttig, 2024), but also contributes to its increase (Gholami et al., 2025). It is assumed that humour promotes concentration on positive aspects of events, which facilitates transformation of negative episodes into constructive narratives (Kaya, Yağan, 2022). Finally, humour is called an immune process that is responsible for regulation of emotions and effectiveness of action in situations of pressure (Reizer et al., 2022).

In light of the above findings, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

H1. ***There is a statistically significant positive correlation between sense of humour and psychological resilience.***

3. Methodology

The study had a cross-sectional and correlational design and was conducted in 2024 using the CAWI method on a sample of 400 professionally active individuals (52% women, 48% men) aged 20-65. The questionnaire was distributed online, which should be considered when interpreting the results. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous, and all respondents were previously informed about the purpose, scope, and principles of the project.

Standardized psychometric instruments were used: the Multidimensional Sense of Humour Scale by Thorson and Powell in the Polish adaptation by Klinowska (MSHS; $\alpha = 0.81$) and the Resilience Measurement Scale developed by Ogińska-Bulik and Juczyński (SPP-25; $\alpha = 0.89$).

All analysed variables and their subscales are listed in Table 1.

Table 1.
Operationalization of the studied variables

Variables	Subscales
1. Sense of humour: IV	MSHS.1 Creating and using humour in a social context MSHS.2 Using humour as a coping strategy MSHS.3 Appreciating humour and humourists MSHS.4 Negative attitudes towards humour and humourists
2. Psychological resilience: DV	SPP.1 Perseverance and determination in action SPP.2 Openness to new experiences and a sense of humour SPP.3 Personal competences for coping with and tolerating negative emotions SPP.4 Tolerance of failures and treating life as a challenge SPP.5 An optimistic attitude to life and the ability to mobilize in difficult situations

Description: IV – independent variable; DV – dependent variable.

Source: own study.

To empirically resolve the previously specified assumption, a number of statistical techniques were used, and detailed results are presented in the next chapter.

4. Research results

4.1. Descriptive statistics of the studied variables

The assessment of the data distribution was carried out using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, assuming a significance level of $p < 0.05$. Values in the range of $0.05 < p < 0.1$ were interpreted as significant at the level of statistical tendency. The statistical characteristics of the humour measurement are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Statistical description of the results of the sense of humour measurement (N = 400)

Sense of humour scales	Descriptive statistics				Distribution		K-S test		AC
	Min	*Max*	*M*	*SD*	*S*	*K*	*K-S*	*p*	
MSHS.1	11.00	55.00	37.31	10.21	-0.43	-0.13	.060	.002	0.935
MSHS.2	8.00	31.00	21.27	4.61	-0.56	-0.20	.104	.001	0.578
MSHS.3	2.00	10.00	8.35	1.75	-1.24	1.42	.187	.001	0.680
MSHS.4	4.00	19.00	7.69	3.35	0.83	1.42	.135	.001	0.745
MSHS	34.00	116.0	83.23	16.23	-0.46	0.04	.066	.001	0.912

Description: M – mean, SD – standard deviation, S – skewness, K – kurtosis, K-S – Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, p – significance level; AC – Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

Source: own study.

All assessed subscales and the total score of the MSHS showed distributions that did not meet the assumptions of normality. Therefore, nonparametric techniques were used for further analyses. The values of Cronbach's alpha coefficient for most subscales confirm their high reliability, especially in the context of using humour for social purposes (MSHS.1; AC = 0.935) and the total scale score (AC = 0.912). It should be mentioned, however, that the subscale of the MSHS.2, concerning the use of humour as a coping strategy, the reliability of which (AC = 0.578) does not reach the recommended threshold of 0.70. This may reveal limited internal consistency of this component, which should be taken into account when interpreting the data. In turn, the negative skewness in the distribution of MSHS.3 scores (appreciation of humour and humourists) signals a predominance of higher scores, although the reliability of this subscale (AC = 0.680) also slightly deviates from the recommended value. The lower means obtained within MSHS.4 may indicate a low level of negative attitudes towards humour in the studied population.

The statistical description of psychological resilience is presented in Table 3.

Table 3.
Statistical description of the results of the psychological resilience measurement (N = 400)

Resilience scales	Descriptive statistics				Distribution		K-S test		AC
	Min	*Max*	*M*	*SD*	*S*	*K*	*K-S*	*p*	
SPP-25.1	6.00	25.00	19.31	4.09	-0.53	-0.09	.087	.001	0.818
SPP-25.2	6.00	25.00	19.89	3.71	-0.77	0.31	.127	.001	0.742
SPP-25.3	6.00	25.00	18.81	4.08	-0.54	-0.09	.118	.001	0.805
SPP-25.4	6.00	25.00	19.21	3.77	-0.52	-0.09	.095	.001	0.758
SPP-25.5	5.00	25.00	17.39	4.00	-0.36	-0.07	.082	.001	0.728
SPP-25	31.00	125.0	94.62	17.11	-0.51	0.11	.064	.001	0.937

Description: M – mean, SD – standard deviation, S – skewness, K – Kurtosis, K-S – Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, p – significance level; AC – Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

Source: own study.

Similarly to the measurement of sense of humour, all subscales of the SPP-25 and the value did not fit into the normal model, which justified the implementation of nonparametric methods. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for individual subscales indicate satisfactory internal consistency (from 0.728 to 0.818), and for the entire scale very high reliability (AC = 0.937). The negative

skewness of the distributions suggests a tendency to give higher ratings in the analysed dimensions of psychological resilience. The average indicators for each of the components were relatively high, which confirms the generally high level of resilience among the respondents.

4.2. Relationships between sense of humour and psychological resilience

In the next stage, the relationships between sense of humour and psychological resilience were analysed. The hypothesis H1 was verified using Spearman's rank correlation (rho), and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.
Spearman rank correlation results for the components of sense of humour and psychological resilience

	MSHS.1	**MSHS.2**	**MSHS.3**	**MSHS.4**	**MSHS**
SPP-25.1	.142**	-0,03	.192**	-.273**	.132**
SPP-25.2	.522**	.422**	.426**	-.387**	.567**
SPP-25.3	.381**	.272**	.253**	-.270**	.392**
SPP-25.4	.362**	.232**	.278**	-.307**	.376**
SPP-25.5	.366**	.294**	.262**	-.243**	.386**
SPP-25	.397**	.261**	.320**	-.343**	.415**

Description: correlation coefficients significant at * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Source: own study.

The collected information confirms a number of statistically significant patterns between the dimensions of the sense of humour and the components of psychological resilience. Most of the coefficients had positive values and were significant at the level of $p < 0.01$. The clearest correlations were observed between the creation and social use of humour (MSHS.1) and openness to new experiences (SPP-25.2), $r = 0.522$, and between the general result of the sense of humour and the same resilience subscale, $r = 0.567$. Moderately strong positive correlations were also found between the general MSHS and personal competences and tolerance of emotions (SPP-25.3) and optimism (SPP-25.5). The only lack of significance was noted in the case of the relationship between MSHS.2 (using humour as a strategy) and perseverance (SPP-25.1), where the coefficient was $r = -0.03$. In turn, the subscale related to negative attitude towards humour (MSHS.4) showed significant negative associations with all aspects of psychological resilience, with the strongest one concerning the readiness to explore the unknown ($r = -0.387$).

The obtained overall correlation coefficient between the general level of sense of humour and psychological resilience ($r = 0.415$) confirms the existence of a moderate, positive relationship between these constructs.

4.3. Discussion

The conducted analyses confirmed hypothesis H1, proving the existence of a moderate correlation (r = 0.415), statistically significant, between the level of sense of humour and psychological resilience. This result suggests that humour can strengthen the resources of an individual in the face of complex experiences.

The revealed regularities are consistent with previous empirical findings indicating the importance of humour in reducing the negative effects of stress (Kyomugisha, 2025). The repeatability of the effect in different contexts allows us to perceive it as an adaptive mechanism.

The particularly strong correlation between the use of jokes in interpersonal contacts (MSHS.1) and openness to new experiences (SPP-25.2) may indicate that the tendency to joke is associated with cognitive flexibility and readiness to explore, which is consistent with the adaptive approach to humour.

In turn, a positive attitude towards comic content, measured using a scale based on reversed questions (MSHS.4), co-occurred with a higher level of almost all analysed aspects of resilience. This pattern reinforces the perception of humour as a source of psychological well-being.

For a more complete image, it should be noted that the relationship between using humour as a coping method (MSHS.2) and persistence in action (SPP-25.1) did not reach significance. This suggests that the importance of humour does not extend evenly to all dimensions of psychological resilience. While humour promotes emotion regulation and distancing from factors that disrupt internal balance, its influence on consistent goal pursuit seems limited or requires a more nuanced research approach. This conclusion indicates the need for further analyses – taking into account humour styles and external circumstances.

The collected empirical data confirm that a sense of humour can support an individual's psychological resilience and constitute a valuable resource in adaptation processes. These conclusions open up space for formulating specific practical implications, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

5. Recommendations

The analyses conducted provide valuable guidelines for the practice of human capital management. Humour, the impact of which is shaped by the way it is used and the individual sensitivity of the recipients, can be an important tool supporting psychological well-being and adaptability of people functioning in organisations.

One of the areas where the research results are directly applicable refers to building a work culture that supports flexible response to stress and environmental variability. Introducing touches of playfulness into everyday interpersonal exchanges – e.g. through team initiatives, internal campaigns or informal rituals – can provide a sense of security, facilitate integration and support recovery after psychologically stressful experiences.

In the professional context, it is particularly important to consciously shape forms of expression. Promoting humorous styles based on kindness, while limiting the manifestations of aggressive or exclusive irony, can influence the psychological atmosphere in the team, improve relationships and prevent conflicts. Therefore, it would be reasonable for superiors to undergo training in recognizing the potential and risks associated with jokes in organizational communication.

Including humour in workshops on soft skills, psychological resilience, and stress management can be a valuable addition to standard development programs. Treating humour as a competency that can be developed can contribute to increased individual effectiveness and greater team cohesion in the face of challenges resulting from the roles and responsibilities they perform.

Despite the valuable conclusions drawn from the conducted analyses, the study is burdened with several limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting research observations and formulating further directions of exploration.

Firstly, the use of a cross-sectional design limits the possibility of drawing causal conclusions. The collected data allow us for capturing only a static image of the relationships between variables, without the possibility of tracking their dynamics over time. For this reason, it is recommended to implement longitudinal studies that will allow us for tracking changes in psychological resilience and tendency to humour – for example, in response to specific stressful events, organizational changes or periods of increased workload.

Secondly, all analyses were based on self-report materials, which carries the risk of cognitive distortions, including the social desirability effect. The subjectivity of responses may lead to over- or underestimation of assessments, especially in the areas of self-reflection and emotional control. In the future, a good direction would be to enrich the research project with a qualitative component (e.g. interviews), observational or behavioural elements, which will allow for capturing the actual patterns of using humour in the professional space.

Expanding the exploration of the issues raised will enable a better understanding of the psychological mechanisms supporting humans in their daily performance of duties in formal structures. In particular, the following is recommended:

- in-depth analysis of situational humour in various organizational contexts – e.g. in medical, educational and technological teams,
- research on potential relationships between humour style and employee burnout, engagement and team effectiveness,

- testing the effectiveness of interventions aimed at developing humour with a view to strengthening resilience – e.g. in the form of training, interpersonal training or psychological health prevention programs.

This approach can support not only the well-being of individuals but also should increase readiness of teams to respond quickly and resilience of entire economic institutions to systemic disruptions.

6. Conclusions

The conducted research confirmed a significant correlation between a sense of humour and psychological resilience, indicating humour as an intrapersonal resource supporting professional functioning. The results revealed variability in the strength and structure of this relationship, highlighting the complexity of adaptive mechanisms relevant to human capital management.

The analysis provided both theoretical and practical grounds for further exploration of the role of humour in supporting employees' psychological well-being and justifies the implementation of strategies aimed at mitigating emotional strain and enhancing effective responses to contemporary organizational challenges.

In this context, the well-known saying *"Laughter is the best medicine"* gains a scientifically grounded dimension.

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