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## Lecturers' Academic Performance During War and Crisis Situations: Resilience, Motivation, Self-Efficacy and Mental Wellbeing

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### Abstract

*The aim of the research was to explore the relationships among four psychological factors including mental resilience, self-efficacy, motivation, and mental wellbeing and professional performance of academic lecturers in war-time. The study adopted a quantitative methodology using closed-ended questionnaires filled by a sample of Israeli academic lecturers in higher education. Strong correlations between each of the factors and academic performance were established. The variables were also found to be interlinked and regularly assisted in maintaining the lecturers' abilities irrespective of emergency circumstances and stress. Analysis revealed that three of the principal variables (mental well-being, self-efficacy, and motivation) accounted for approximately 70% of the variance in professional performance collectively. The respondents also expressed preference for a mix of work environment (face-to-face and virtual), which was significantly and positively associated with the variables. This finding strengthens the connection between organizational support and coping abilities of lecturers during times of war and crises. The study findings are reflected in the necessity for investments in lecturers' internal resources development, not only as a response to crisis management but also as part of a strategy for ensuring professional performance and teaching quality.*

**Keywords:** Academic Performance, Resilience, Self-Efficacy, Motivation, Mental Wellbeing, Lecturers, Crisis Situations.

### Introduction

The 'Iron Swords' war since October 7<sup>th</sup> has created an ongoing state of emergency that has deeply affected Israel's educational and higher education systems. In such circumstances, the importance of psychological variables like resilience, mental wellbeing, self-efficacy, and motivation is emphasized as a key influence on the functioning of academic lecturers (Kimhi et al., 2021; Schwartz et al., 2022).

Resilience is defined as the ability to adapt successfully to stressful situations, which is a key mechanism for preserving functional stability during times of crisis (Ross et al., 2024). Mental wellbeing, which includes emotional balance, a sense of meaning, and the ability to cope with negative emotions, is another protective resource in taxing situations (Keyes & Westerhof, 2023). Self-efficacy, which is defined as one's belief in his or her ability to effectively perform tasks, has been found to have a substantial effect on instructional adaptation (Zee & Koomen, 2022). Intrinsic motivation increases persistence and professional performance even in changing and stressful conditions (Ryan & Deci, 2020). However, this study aimed to investigate the influence psychological factors on lecturers' academic performance during war-time (Al-Taie & Khattak, 2024). Furthermore, this study seeks to identify performance patterns for lecturers and provide observations for enhancing academic staff in future crises.

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## **Literature Review**

### **Resilience and Mental Wellbeing of Lecturers During Periods of War**

Fletcher and Sarkar (2022) defined resilience as the psychological and emotional ability for individuals to act in effective and positive manner toward challenges in life and to recover from it while maintaining their performance. Resilience terms is considered as an integrated set of several factors like traits, skills, optimism, emotion, self-efficacy and the ability to adapt in uncertain environment.

In an academic environment, personal resilience is a key factor that enables lecturers to cope effectively with challenges in teaching, research, and interpersonal communication under conditions of extreme pressure and stress. Lecturers with high resilience tend to adapt better to changes, maintain high motivation and a sense of purpose, and experience lower levels of fatigue and psychological distress (Schwartz et al., 2022).

Mental wellbeing, on the other hand, describes an individual's feelings of satisfaction, happiness, self-fulfillment, and emotional balance (Keyes & Westerhof, 2023). During emergencies like the current war, the mental wellbeing of lecturers is particularly vulnerable. They face increased demands, such as teaching under non-optimal conditions, transitioning to online instruction, continuous research pressure, and the need to provide emotional support to students and colleagues, all while coping with personal and family concerns. The literature clearly indicates a positive link between personal resilience and wellbeing. The higher an individual's personal resilience, the greater their ability to cope with stressful events and maintain stable psychological wellbeing over time (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2022; Van der Meer et al., 2023).

### **Self-Efficacy and Motivation of Lecturers During Periods of War**

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their ability to organize and execute the actions needed to achieve specific goals, especially in challenging situations (Bandura, 1997). It is one of the most important psychological variables in understanding human behavior and is a key predictor of performance, perseverance, adaptation to stress, and resilience in the face of failure (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). In the academic context, a lecturer's self-efficacy includes their belief in their ability to teach effectively, motivate students, cope with academic workloads, and maintain high-quality instruction under conditions of uncertainty and pressure.

Motivation, on the other hand, refers to the internal and external forces that drive an individual to perform actions, persevere in them, and strive to achieve goals (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Zou et al., 2023). Self-Determination Theory makes a distinction between intrinsic motivation, which is based on interest, satisfaction, personal interest and meaning. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is based on external rewards, pressures, or demands. In the context of academic lecturers, intrinsic motivation is the impetus to engage in research, to create high-quality educational content, and to contribute to the knowledge community, even in times of stress and conflict (Zou et al., 2023). During crises, these two concepts become critical. Lecturers with a strong sense of self-efficacy and with intrinsic motivation are able to uphold their professional commitment, marshal psychological resources, and adapt to changing circumstances.

### **Self-Efficacy and Motivation, and Academic Performance**

Empirical studies suggested a robust and positive relationship between high self-efficacy and academic achievement, mental resilience, and professional involvement, particularly amidst times of uncertainty (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). High self-efficacious lecturers hold a belief

that they are able to manage teaching issues, distance learning adaptation, and the emotional and academic guidance of students even amidst drastic situations (Uysal & Derya, 2023). For example, a big study during the COVID-19 pandemic showed that lecturers high in self-efficacy adapted more quickly to online teaching, were more pedagogically creative, and achieved high academic teaching quality (Kim & Asbury, 2020). These characteristics reduced burnout feelings and personal distress as well as helped their professional competence.

In the motivational context, research conducted by Kusurkar et al. (2021) indicated that intrinsic motivation among academic staff is a significant predictor of high levels of perseverance, creativity, and professional engagement, especially during times of crisis. The findings demonstrated that during crises, when extrinsic rewards are compromised (e.g., status, job stability and salary), lecturers who are driven by intrinsic motivation manage to maintain high levels of academic commitment and significant functional flexibility. The literature further suggests that high self-efficacy together with intrinsic motivation act as a protective means against a decline in academic performance during times of stress. This combination encourages lecturers to see themselves as agents of change, capable of positively influencing their environment in spite of the circumstances, and to turn a crisis into an opportunity for learning and growth (Allison, 2024; Zee & Koomen, 2016).

### **Lecturers' Academic Performance in War-time**

War was a severe and multi-faceted systemic crisis that directly impacts higher education systems. The local population, including lecturers and academic staff, are forced to contend with a new reality of a loss of personal security, interrupted routines, physical separation from universities, emotional strain, and general anxiety. These factors affect both their teaching and research functions. Consequently, lecturers face administrative and academic burdens. These challenges highlight the demands related to implementing remote learning and using technologies. Lecturers may find it difficult to adapt to online settings that challenge their ability to interact and maintain a connection with their students.

One of the significant challenges for lecturers is to maintain a work-life balance. The move to teaching from home blurred the lines between work and family. Some reported an increased workload and difficulty with time management. However, some also noted advantages in the flexibility that working from home allowed (Avidar et al., 2020). Lecturers had to develop additional skills, including digital literacy, time management abilities, and improved academic performance, using more innovative teaching methods that incorporate technology. Lecturers emphasized that the support provided by their institution is important and critical for their success (Sutoro, 2021).

### **Hypotheses**

Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses are formulated:

1. A positive relationship will be found between lecturers' personal resilience and performance during war, such that the higher the level of resilience – the higher the professional performance.
2. A positive relationship will be found between lecturers' self-efficacy and performance during war, such that the higher the sense of self-efficacy – the higher the professional performance.
3. A positive relationship will be found between lecturers' (intrinsic and extrinsic)

motivation and performance during war, such that the higher the level of motivation – the higher the professional performance.

4. A positive relationship will be found between lecturers' level of wellbeing and their performance during war, such that the higher the sense of wellbeing – the higher the professional performance.

5. Levels of mental wellbeing, self-efficacy and motivation significantly predict the academic performance of lecturers in times of war.

## **Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative method to explore the influence of psychological variables including resilience, mental wellbeing, self-efficacy and motivation on the lecturer performance in academia during the war-time periods.

## **Sample**

The study sample included 134 lecturers from all central and peripheral areas in addition to the communities affected by the security situation. Moreover, the sample was diverse in terms of gender, experience, education and religions

## **Procedure**

Data was gathered by means of an online questionnaire, which was distributed to academics in various academic institutes throughout Israel during the 'Iron Swords' war. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and the participants were requested to sign a consent form before filling out the questionnaire.

The procedure included a number of steps.

1. Distribution – the questionnaire was sent via email and designated lecturer groups, emphasizing that the study was for research and would not include personal details.

2. Informed consent – at the top of the questionnaire, the participants were requested to sign a consent form, which made it clear that participation was voluntary and could be stopped at any stage.

3. Data collection – the participants answered questions regarding demographic data and then the five measures that were examined.

4. Reliability – Cronbach's  $\alpha$  calculations were performed to ensure the reliability of the scales. The results indicated high internal reliability,

5. Statistical analysis included: descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and linear regressions to examine the contribution of predictors.

The research was conducted with full adherence to ethical principles, including the protection of data confidentiality and participants' privacy.

## **Tools**

The questionnaire included five validated sub-questionnaires that were compatible with the study's goals: Psychological resilience questions were based on the questionnaire developed by Wagnild (2009), which examines the individual's ability to positively cope with challenging situations. Reliability  $\alpha=.859$ . The self-efficacy questionnaire was adapted from Bandura's

(1997) work, and examines the individual's belief in their ability to successfully complete complex tasks. Reliability  $\alpha=.847$ . The motivation questionnaire was founded on Deci and Ryan's (1985) model and focuses on the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Reliability  $\alpha=.873$ . Mental wellbeing was adapted from Keyes' (2002) Mental Health Continuum, which measures the spectrum of mental health between lethargy and flourishing. Reliability  $\alpha=.883$ . Professional academic performance was measured with Goleman's (1998) approach concerning the relationship between emotional intelligence and effective professional performance. Reliability  $\alpha=.787$ . The final questionnaire included six demographic items and 25 items measured on a Likert scale of 1 (*Do not agree at all*) to 5 (*Agree completely*).

#### 4. Data Analysis and Findings

First, the demographic data of the participants were examined. Table 1 describes the participants' demographics.

		Mean (SD)	N
Age*		46.4 (9.72)	134
Frequency (%)			
Gender	Male	48 (35.8%)	134
	Female	86 (64.2%)	
Professional experience	Up to 5 years	19 (14.2%)	134
	6-10 years	35 (26.1%)	
	11-20 years	46 (34.3%)	
	Over 20 years	34 (25.4%)	
Employment	Full-time	87 (64.9%)	134
	Part-time	47 (35.1%)	
Mode of work	Face-to-face	64 (47.8%)	134
	Online	13 (9.7%)	
	Mixed online and face-to-face	57 (42.5%)	

Table 1. Demographic Data of Participants (N=134)

\* The age range of the participants was between 21 and 65.

The next step was to analyze the correlations between the research variables included in the hypotheses and the age variable (see Table 2).

	M	SD	Performance	Wellbeing	Motivation	Self-efficacy	Resilience
Resilience	4.04	.68					
Self-efficacy	4.20	.74	.69***				
Motivation	4.10	.68	.69***	.73***			
Wellbeing	4.17	.75	.61***	.58***	.70***		
Performance	3.88	.76	.60***	.73***	.75***	.74***	

Age	46.4	9.7	.11	.04	.08	.07	.09
	0	2					

Table 2. Correlations between Variables

\*\*\* $p < .001$

The first hypothesis posited that a positive relationship would be found between the respondents' level of psychological resilience and their professional performance during the war. We employed Pearson's correlations to examine this relationship, and found a significant, positive and strong relationship ( $R_{(132)} = .60$ ,  $p < .001$ ) between the variables. The higher the lecturers' resilience was, so was their professional performance, and vice versa. The first hypothesis was corroborated. The relationship is depicted in Figure 1.

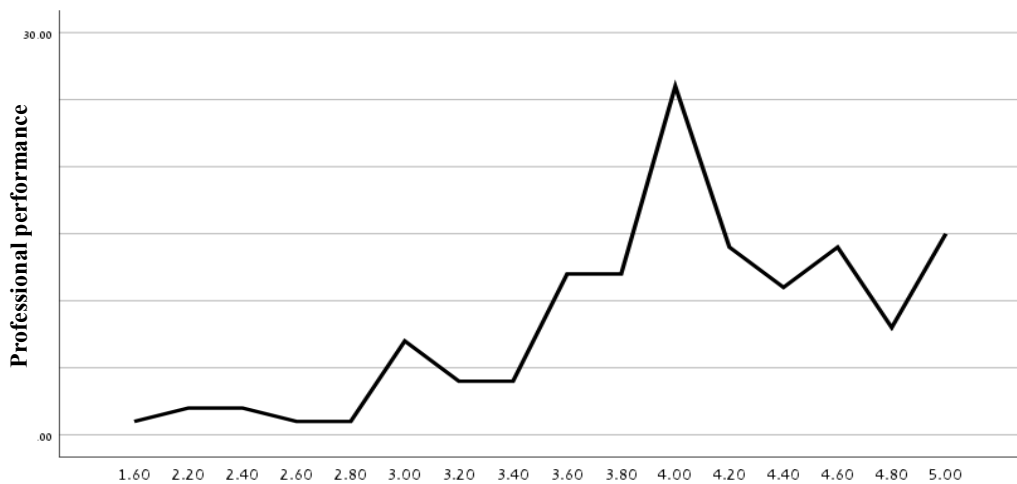


Figure 1. The Correlation Between Resilience and Professional Performance

The second hypothesis predicted that a positive relationship would be found between the respondents' level of self-efficacy and their professional performance during the war. Person's correlation analysis found a significant, positive and strong relationship between the variables ( $R_{(132)} = .73$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The higher the lecturers' resilience was, so was their professional performance, and vice versa. The second hypothesis was upheld. The relationship is depicted in Figure 2.

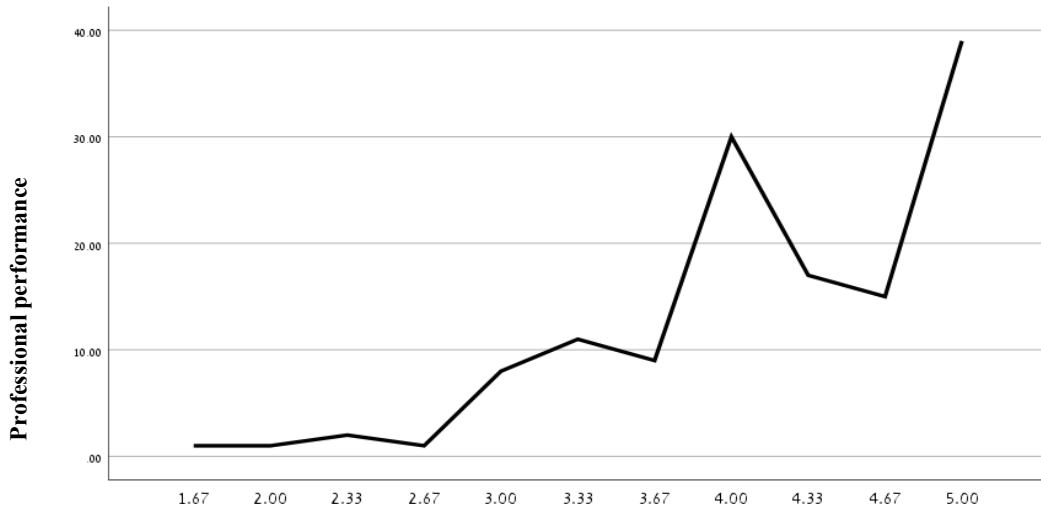


Figure 2. The Correlation Between Self-Efficacy and Professional Performance

The third hypothesis posited that a positive relationship would be found between the respondents' level of motivation and their professional performance during the war. Pearson's correlations analysis found a significant, positive and strong relationship between the variables ( $R_{(132)}=.75, p<.001$ ). The higher the lecturers' motivation was, their professional performance was too, and vice versa. The third hypothesis was corroborated. The relationship is depicted in Figure 3.

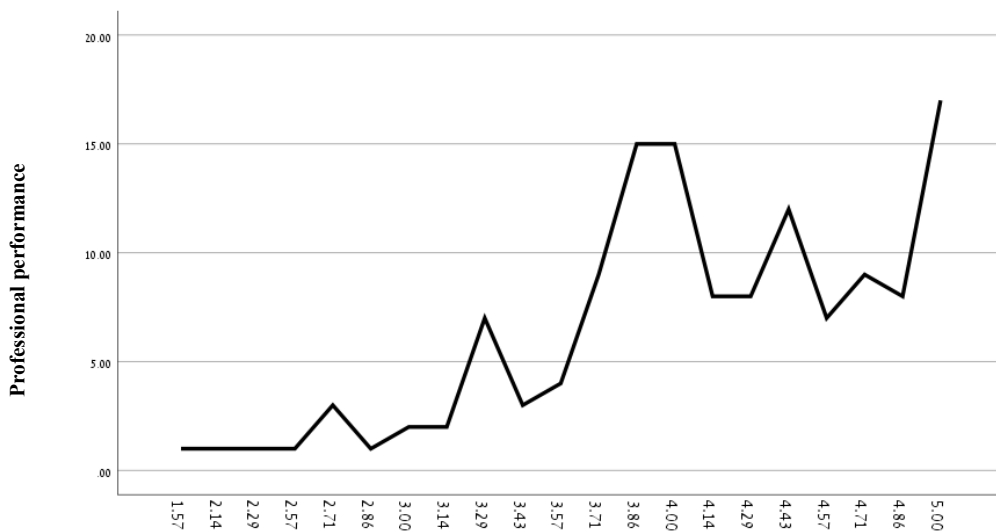


Figure 3. The Correlation Between Motivation and Professional Performance

The fourth hypothesis predicted that a positive relationship would be found between the respondents' mental wellbeing and their professional performance during the war. Pearson's correlations analysis found a significant, positive and strong relationship between the variables ( $R_{(132)}=.74, p<.001$ ). The higher the lecturers' mental wellbeing was, so was their professional

performance, and vice versa. The fourth hypothesis was corroborated. The relationship is depicted in Figure 4.

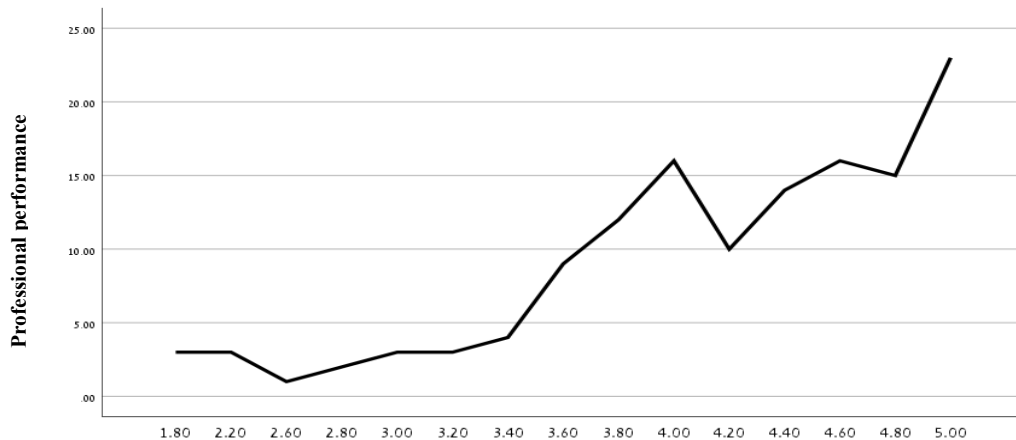


Figure 4. The Correlation Between Mental Wellbeing and Professional Performance

The fifth hypothesis posited that the levels of mental wellbeing, self-efficacy and motivation would significantly predict the respondents' professional performance during the war. To examine this hypothesis, multiple linear regression analysis was performed. The prediction model was found to be significant ( $F_{(3,130)}=101.07, p<.001$ ). Mental wellbeing, self-efficacy and motivation explained 70% of the variance in the respondents' level of professional performance ( $R^2=0.70$ ). Examining the individual contribution of each variable – mental wellbeing, self-efficacy and motivation – to predicting professional performance, we found that lecturers' mental wellbeing was the most significant predictor of their professional performance ( $\beta=.37, t=5.39, p<.001$ ), followed by self-efficacy ( $\beta=.35, t=4.82, p<.001$ ), and then motivation ( $\beta=.24, t=2.89, p<.01$ ). The fifth hypothesis was upheld. Table 3 presents the results of the linear regression (dependent variable: professional performance).

	B	S.E.	$\beta$	t	p
Mental wellbeing	.37	.07	.37	5.39***	<.001
Self-efficacy	.35	.07	.35	4.82***	<.001
Motivation	.26	.09	.24	2.89**	.004

Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis (N=134)

\* $p<.05$  \*\* $p<.01$  \*\*\* $p<.001$

Moreover, the findings revealed that no significant relationships were found between the independent variables: age, gender, employment, or mode of work and the dependent research variables: resilience, professional performance, self-efficacy, motivation and mental wellbeing. The general multi-variable model was significant (*Pillai's Trace*=.17,  $F_{(10,252)}= 2.13, p<.05$ ) between mode of work (face-to-face/online/hybrid) and the variables: resilience ( $F_{(2,131)}= 6.03, p<.01, \text{Partial } \eta^2=.08$ ), self-efficacy ( $F_{(2,131)}= 5.09, p<.01, \text{Partial } \eta^2=.07$ ), motivation ( $F_{(2,131)}= 4.47, p<.05, \text{Partial } \eta^2=.06$ ), wellbeing ( $F_{(2,131)}= 7.49, p<.001, \text{Partial } \eta^2=.10$ ), and professional performance ( $F_{(2,131)}= 4.03, p<.05, \text{Partial } \eta^2=.06$ ). Scheffe post-hoc analysis shows that, for all variables, there were significant differences between the hybrid mode of work (face-to face and online), and online teaching and face-to-face teaching, in favor of the hybrid mode. Table 4

describes the means and standard deviations of the research variables by mode of work.

	Face-to-face N=64	Online N=13	Face-to-face and online N=57
Resilience	3.92 (0.64)	3.69 (0.96)	4.26 (0.59)
Self-efficacy	4.11 (0.73)	3.77 (0.91)	4.40 (0.66)
Motivation	4.04 (0.60)	3.68 (0.79)	4.26 (0.70)
Wellbeing	4.03 (0.76)	3.70 (0.76)	4.42 (0.65)
Performance	3.83 (0.72)	3.40 (0.89)	4.03 (0.72)

Table 4. Means and SD of Research Variables By Mode of Work

## Discussion

The results consistently indicate significant and strong relationships between psychological variables (resilience, mental wellbeing, self-efficacy, and motivation) and the academic performance of lecturers in times of war. The first hypothesis, which posited that personal resilience would predict a higher level of performance among lecturers in times of emergency, received significant empirical support. This finding is supported by classical models of resilience as an adaptive resource that allows for the preservation of professional functioning under pressure (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2022). Lecturers with high levels of resilience performed better, maintained emotional stability, and quickly adapted to dynamic challenges. Additionally, this finding is supported by Isnainy & Zainaro (2024) and other studies from the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (Ross et al., 2024; Kowler et al., 2023), which pointed to the contribution of personal resilience to adaptability, maintaining teaching effectiveness, and emotional stability. However, this is in contrast to the findings of Bento et al. (2021), who identified burnout and a loss of a sense of value.

The second hypothesis, which examined the relationship between lecturers' sense of self-efficacy and their professional performance during the war, was fully supported. Analysis found a strong and significant positive correlation ( $r = .73$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that the higher self-efficacy, the higher the level of professional performance. These findings are consistent with the research literature, which underlines the role of self-efficacy as a key predictor of effective professional performance, especially under conditions of uncertainty. A sense of efficacy is nourished, among other things, by prior training, successful experience, and institutional support, which provide the lecturer with the confidence to cope with the challenges of online and crisis-related teaching (Naylor & Nyanjom, 2021).

The third hypothesis, which examined the relationship between lecturers' level of motivation (both intrinsic and extrinsic) and their professional performance during war-time, was fully supported. A strong and significant positive correlation was found between the two variables ( $r = .75$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that high motivation, whether stemming from a sense of mission, personal interest, or external rewards, is directly related to maintaining a high professional standard. This finding resonates with Deci and Ryan's (2020) Self-Determination Theory, which

emphasizes that internal motivation is a central driver of perseverance, creativity, and high performance. The studies by Kulikowski et al. (2021) and Akour et al. (2020) also support the current finding, pointing to a consistent link between motivation among lecturers and their engagement, innovation, and professional development. However, contradictory findings from the COVID-19 period indicated a decline in motivation due to workload, emotional fatigue, and the challenges of online teaching, which harmed the quality of instruction and pedagogical engagement.

In this context, the variable 'mode of work' emerges as significant. Lecturers who operated in a hybrid or frontal environment reported higher motivation compared to those who worked exclusively with remote learning. Online teaching, which requires technological proficiency, coping with social distance, and disciplinary challenges, can erode the sense of satisfaction and reduce motivation. To this, one must add the impact of student engagement: a lack of presence, absence of feedback, or low involvement on their part may constitute a demotivating factor for the lecturers.

The fourth hypothesis, which examined the relationship between mental wellbeing and the academic performance of lecturers during war, was fully supported. A strong and significant positive correlation was found ( $r = .74$ ,  $p < .001$ ) between a high level of wellbeing, characterized by optimism, a sense of purpose, social satisfaction, and emotional regulation ability, and maintaining optimum professional performance. This finding is supported by Ghafar (2024), who emphasized the contribution of mental wellbeing to sustaining teaching quality, especially under conditions of stress and uncertainty. This effect is particularly evident during crisis periods, as was also observed in studies conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lecturers who had experienced a decrease in their mental wellbeing reported a decline in motivation, performance, and identification with their academic role. This association could also be attributed to systemic challenges such as workload, work-life imbalance, job uncertainty, and a lack of institutional support, which have been identified as central factors that harm wellbeing and academic performance (Hammoudi Halat et al., 2023). Lecturers who experience burnout, anxiety, or a lack of self-worth struggle to maintain a high level of performance over time, especially when the work environment changes frequently and does not offer psychological resources or anchors.

Finally, the fifth hypothesis, which posited that mental wellbeing, self-efficacy, and motivation are significant predictors of lecturers' professional performance during the war, was fully supported. The linear regression findings showed that the three variables together explain about 70% of the variance in professional performance ( $R^2 = .70$ ), a statistic that points to the significant contribution of psychological resources to stability and effective functioning in an emergency.

Mental wellbeing was found to be the main predictor of professional performance ( $\beta = .37$ ). This finding aligns with the literature, which indicated that mental wellbeing is a prerequisite of optimal performance in stress situations (Ghafar, 2024). High levels of a sense of purpose, satisfaction and emotional equilibrium support the lecturer's ability to persevere, lead a class, and cope with changing burdens. A sense of self-efficacy was the second most dominant predictor ( $\beta = .35$ ) and is supported by Bandura's (1997) and Raveh et al.'s (2024) work; namely, a sense of inner ability, especially in online or hybrid mode of teaching, contributes to optimal coping with systemic changes. Motivation was the third predictor ( $\beta = .24$ ). Although its general level was high, its relative contribution as a predictor was lower than that of wellbeing and self-

efficacy, possibly due to external conditions – such as overload, disrupted teaching or technological limitations – that reduced possibilities of optimal academic performance (Kulikowski et al., 2021).

These findings highlight the importance of investing in teaching staff's psychological wellbeing, as a basis for maintaining a high professional level even under extreme conditions. It seems that combining three internal resources – resilience, self-efficacy and motivation – is an essential protective mechanism during crisis situations. In general, these findings emphasize the belief that professional academic performance during crises is not based on a single resource, but on an elaborate interaction between psychological resources, self-perception and one's employment context. This conclusion is in line with other research trends, which indicate the importance of building institutional and individual resilience as a strategy to deal with systemic crises in higher education institutions (Van der Meer et al., 2023).

One of the more interesting findings concerns the lecturers' work mode. In the sample of lecturers, we found that working in a hybrid manner is associated with higher levels of personal resilience, professional performance, motivation, self-efficacy, and mental wellbeing, compared to working solely online or solely face-to-face. For example, the average personal resilience in hybrid work was 4.26, compared to 3.92 for face-to-face work and 3.69 for remote work. Similarly, mental wellbeing in hybrid work was 4.42, compared to 4.03 for face-to-face and 3.71 for remote. Among lecturers, it was found that professional experience is related to self-efficacy. Lecturers with 20 years or more of experience showed a higher sense of self-efficacy ( $M=4.46$ ) compared to lecturers with 6-10 years of experience ( $M=3.93$ ). This finding aligns with the indication that cumulative experience over the years contributes to confidence in professional abilities, a phenomenon also documented in research literature (e.g., Alimad Bahtiar et al., 2023).

## Conclusion

The current study examined five key psychological variables—personal resilience, self-efficacy, motivation, mental wellbeing, and professional performance—among academic lecturers during the period of war. All research hypotheses were fully confirmed, and a significant positive correlation was found between high levels of personal resilience, self-efficacy, motivation and mental wellbeing, and high levels of professional performance. The study's contribution is both theoretical, by highlighting the importance of psychological resources for maintaining high-quality teaching, and practical, by proposing systemic support programs to strengthen lecturers' self-efficacy, resilience, and mental wellbeing. However, the study's limitations included the use of quantitative tools only, a non-representative sample, and the inability to infer causality. Future research is recommended to incorporate qualitative approaches, examine additional mediating variables, and conduct comparisons across different sectors. Finally, it is recommended to develop and test dedicated intervention programs to strengthen the psychological resources of lecturers during periods of crisis.

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