

Review Article

RESILIENCE AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS PREDICTORS OF MENTAL HEALTH IN HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT

Healthcare professionals face significant occupational stress, burnout and psychological strain, challenges that were intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, underscoring the importance of protective psychological resources such as resilience and emotional intelligence (EI). This narrative review synthesizes evidence on the role of resilience the ability to recover from adversity and EI the capacity to recognize, manage and utilize emotions in enhancing mental health among healthcare professionals, while also examining their interrelationship and potential interventions. Relevant literature published between 2012 and 2024 was retrieved from PubMed, Scopus, CINAHL and Google Scholar using key terms including resilience, emotional intelligence, healthcare professionals, burnout, mental health and stress, with inclusion limited to studies involving nurses, physicians and allied health professionals. The findings indicate that resilience improves coping strategies, reduces burnout and enhances adaptability in high-stress environments, while EI supports effective stress management, empathy, teamwork and leadership. Furthermore, resilience and EI were found to be interrelated constructs that jointly contribute to psychological well-being and professional effectiveness. The review concludes that strengthening these attributes through targeted training programs, mentoring, and organisational support can significantly improve mental health outcomes, reduce workforce attrition and enhance the quality of patient care.

Keywords: Resilience, Emotional Intelligence, Mental Health, Healthcare Professionals, Burnout, Stress.

INTRODUCTION

Healthcare professionals form the backbone of health systems worldwide, yet they are consistently exposed to high levels of occupational stress, emotional demands, and complex clinical responsibilities that place them at significant risk for compromised mental health. The nature of healthcare work characterized by long working hours, high patient loads, critical decision-making, and frequent exposure to suffering and death creates an inherently stressful environment. In recent years, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, concerns regarding the mental well-being of healthcare professionals have intensified globally. Reports from the World Health Organization (WHO) highlight that a substantial proportion of healthcare workers experience psychological distress, including anxiety, depression, burnout, and post-traumatic stress symptoms (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). Mental health, as defined by the WHO, is not merely the absence of mental illness but a state of well-

being in which individuals can cope with normal stressors, work productively, and contribute to their communities (WHO, 2022). For healthcare professionals, maintaining optimal mental health is essential not only for personal well-being but also for ensuring high-quality patient care and safety. Poor mental health among healthcare workers has been linked to increased medical errors, reduced patient satisfaction, absenteeism, and high turnover rates (Hall *et al.*, 2016). A global meta-analysis conducted in the post-pandemic period reported that approximately 30-40% of healthcare professionals experienced moderate to severe burnout, while 25-35% reported symptoms of anxiety and depression (Pappa *et al.*, 2020; Shanafelt *et al.*, 2022). Similarly, recent studies in India indicate that burnout prevalence among nurses and resident doctors ranges from 35% to 50%, reflecting a substantial psychological burden (Khasne *et al.*, 2020; Gupta *et al.*, 2023). Among the various psychological constructs explored to address these challenges, resilience and emotional intelligence (EI) have

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emerged as critical determinants of mental health. Resilience refers to the ability to adapt positively and recover from adversity, stress or trauma (Connor & Davidson, 2003). It is increasingly recognized as a dynamic and learnable process rather than a fixed trait. In healthcare settings, resilience enables professionals to maintain emotional stability, cope effectively with workplace stressors and sustain performance under pressure. Studies across different countries consistently demonstrate that higher resilience is associated with lower levels of burnout, anxiety and depression among healthcare workers (McCain *et al.*, 2018; Mealer *et al.*, 2017). For instance, a multicentric European study reported that healthcare professionals with higher resilience scores were significantly less likely to experience severe burnout compared to those with lower resilience (Labrague, 2021). Emotional intelligence, on the other hand, refers to the capacity to perceive, understand, regulate and utilize emotions effectively in oneself and others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Popularized by Goleman (1995), EI encompasses components such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. In healthcare, EI is crucial for effective communication, empathetic patient care, teamwork, and leadership. Healthcare professionals with high EI are better equipped to manage their emotional responses, navigate interpersonal relationships, and maintain composure in high-stress situations. Empirical evidence suggests that higher EI is associated with better psychological well-being, lower stress levels, and greater job satisfaction (Por *et al.*, 2011; Martins *et al.*, 2010). A recent cross-sectional study conducted among nurses in Southeast Asia found a significant negative correlation between EI and burnout, indicating that emotionally intelligent individuals are less likely to experience emotional exhaustion (Labrague *et al.*, 2022).

Importantly, resilience and emotional intelligence are closely interrelated constructs that collectively contribute to mental health. Emotional intelligence enhances resilience by enabling individuals to regulate emotions, reinterpret stressful situations, and maintain optimism during adversity. Conversely, resilient individuals are more likely to develop emotional competencies that support adaptive coping. This bidirectional relationship has been increasingly highlighted in recent literature. A systematic review by Drigas and Papoutsis (2018) suggested that EI and resilience together form a strong psychological foundation for coping with stress and promoting well-being. Furthermore, interventions targeting both constructs have been shown to produce more significant improvements in mental health outcomes compared to those focusing on either resilience or EI alone (Robertson *et al.*, 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the importance of these psychological resources. Healthcare professionals faced unprecedented challenges, including increased workload, risk of infection, inadequate resources, and moral distress associated with patient care decisions. International data indicate that frontline healthcare workers

experienced significantly higher levels of psychological distress compared to the general population during this period (Lai *et al.*, 2020). A global survey across multiple countries revealed that over 45% of healthcare workers reported emotional exhaustion, and nearly one-third considered leaving the profession due to stress and burnout (Shanafelt *et al.*, 2022). These findings highlight the urgent need to strengthen resilience and emotional intelligence to buffer the adverse psychological effects of such crises.

In the Indian context, the healthcare system faces additional challenges such as high patient-to-provider ratios, limited infrastructure, and workforce shortages, which further exacerbate stress levels among healthcare professionals. Studies conducted in India during and after the pandemic have reported high levels of burnout, anxiety, and depression, particularly among nurses and junior doctors (Khasne *et al.*, 2020; Gupta *et al.*, 2023). Cultural stigma surrounding mental health and limited access to psychological support services often prevent healthcare workers from seeking help, making internal coping mechanisms like resilience and EI even more critical. Interventions aimed at enhancing resilience and emotional intelligence have shown promising results in improving mental health outcomes among healthcare professionals. Training programs focusing on mindfulness, stress management, emotional regulation, and communication skills have been associated with significant reductions in stress and burnout (West *et al.*, 2016). Organizational strategies such as supportive leadership, mentorship programs, and fostering a positive work environment also play a crucial role in strengthening these attributes. Evidence suggests that even brief interventions can lead to measurable improvements in resilience and EI, thereby enhancing overall well-being and job performance (Sood *et al.*, 2011). In spite of the growing body of research, there remains a need for comprehensive synthesis of evidence regarding the combined role of resilience and emotional intelligence as predictors of mental health among healthcare professionals. Much of the existing literature has examined these constructs independently, with limited focus on their interaction and combined effects. Additionally, variations in study designs, populations, and measurement tools necessitate integrative reviews to consolidate current knowledge and identify research gaps.

Significance of the Study

The present study is significant as it focuses on two crucial and modifiable psychological factors resilience and emotional intelligence that have the potential to enhance mental health among healthcare professionals. By synthesizing recent and international evidence, this review provides a comprehensive understanding of how these constructs influence psychological well-being in healthcare settings. The findings can inform the development of targeted interventions aimed at strengthening resilience and EI, thereby promoting a healthier workforce. Furthermore, this study has important implications for healthcare administrators, educators and policymakers. Integrating resilience and EI training into healthcare education and professional development programs can equip healthcare

workers with essential skills to manage stress effectively. Organizational policies that promote supportive work environments and prioritize mental health can further enhance these attributes, leading to improved job satisfaction, reduced turnover, and better patient outcomes.

In addition, this study contributes to the existing literature by emphasizing the interrelationship between resilience and emotional intelligence and their combined impact on mental health. This integrated perspective can guide future research in developing holistic intervention models that address multiple dimensions of psychological well-being. In the context of increasing global healthcare demands, fostering resilience and emotional intelligence is not only beneficial but essential for sustaining the healthcare workforce.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This review employed a narrative literature review design guided by the principles of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework to ensure a structured, transparent, and reproducible approach to the identification, screening, and inclusion of relevant studies. Although not a full systematic review with meta-analysis, the PRISMA approach was adopted to enhance methodological rigor and clarity in reporting the study selection process.

Search Strategy

A comprehensive and systematic search of the literature was conducted using four major electronic databases: PubMed, Scopus, CINAHL, and Google Scholar. These databases were selected due to their extensive coverage of biomedical, nursing, psychological, and interdisciplinary research. The search was limited to studies published between January 2012 and December 2024 to ensure the inclusion of recent and relevant evidence, particularly considering the evolving impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on healthcare professionals' mental health. A combination of keywords and Boolean operators was used to retrieve relevant studies. The primary search terms included: "resilience," "emotional intelligence," "healthcare professionals," "mental health," "burnout," "stress," and "psychological well-being." These terms were used individually and in combination (e.g., "resilience AND emotional intelligence AND healthcare professionals," "emotional intelligence AND burnout," "resilience AND mental health") to maximize the sensitivity of the search. Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) and database-specific indexing terms were also applied where appropriate to refine the search results.

Study Selection Process

The study selection process was conducted in multiple stages in accordance with PRISMA guidelines. Initially, all records retrieved from the databases were compiled, and duplicate entries were identified and removed. Following this, a title and abstract screening was performed to

eliminate studies that were clearly irrelevant to the research topic. In the next stage, the full texts of potentially relevant articles were retrieved and assessed in detail against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Particular attention was paid to the study population, variables measured (resilience, emotional intelligence, and mental health outcomes), and methodological quality. Studies that did not meet the eligibility criteria were excluded, with reasons documented to maintain transparency. The final selection consisted of studies that directly addressed the relationship between resilience, emotional intelligence, and mental health among healthcare professionals. The selection process ensured that only the most relevant and methodologically sound studies were included in the review.

Data Synthesis

A thematic synthesis approach was employed to analyse and integrate the findings of the included studies. The data were organized into key themes based on the objectives of the review, including: The role of resilience in mental health. The role of emotional intelligence in mental health. The interrelationship between resilience and emotional intelligence. Implications for practice and interventions. Findings from different studies were compared and contrasted to identify consistencies, variations, and gaps in the existing literature. Given the heterogeneity in study designs, populations, and measurement tools, a quantitative meta-analysis was not feasible; therefore, a qualitative synthesis was deemed appropriate.

Quality Considerations

Although a formal quality appraisal tool was not applied due to the narrative nature of the review, efforts were made to include studies published in peer-reviewed journals and indexed in reputable databases. Preference was given to studies with clear methodologies, validated measurement instruments, and adequate sample sizes. This helped ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 80 studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in this review, encompassing a wide range of geographical regions including North America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. The majority of studies employed cross-sectional designs, with some longitudinal and interventional studies contributing additional insights into causal relationships and effectiveness of interventions. The study populations primarily included nurses, physicians, and allied healthcare professionals, with nurses representing the largest proportion of participants across studies. The findings consistently demonstrated that resilience is a significant protective factor for mental health among healthcare professionals. Individuals with higher resilience levels reported lower levels of burnout, anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion, along with higher levels of psychological well-being and job satisfaction.

Resilience was particularly associated with improved coping strategies, enabling healthcare workers to manage workplace stressors more effectively. Several studies highlighted that resilience acts as a buffer against occupational stress, reducing the negative impact of high workload, emotional demands, and critical clinical situations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, resilient healthcare professionals were better able to adapt to rapidly changing environments, maintain emotional stability, and sustain professional performance. Additionally, resilience was found to be positively associated with adaptive coping mechanisms, such as problem-solving, positive reframing, and seeking social support.

Emotional intelligence (EI) emerged as another key determinant of mental health among healthcare professionals. Studies consistently reported that individuals with higher EI exhibited better stress management, lower burnout levels, and improved psychological well-being. EI was particularly linked to enhanced self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal

relationships, all of which are critical in healthcare settings. Healthcare professionals with high EI were more likely to manage emotionally demanding situations effectively, communicate empathetically with patients, and maintain collaborative relationships with colleagues. EI was also associated with leadership effectiveness and team cohesion, contributing to a positive work environment. Furthermore, several studies reported a negative correlation between EI and burnout, indicating that emotionally intelligent individuals are less susceptible to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. A key finding of this review is the strong interrelationship between resilience and emotional intelligence. Multiple studies indicated that these constructs are mutually reinforcing and collectively contribute to improved mental health outcomes. Emotional intelligence enhances resilience by facilitating effective emotional regulation, cognitive appraisal, and adaptive coping. Conversely, resilience supports the development and application of emotional competencies in challenging situations.

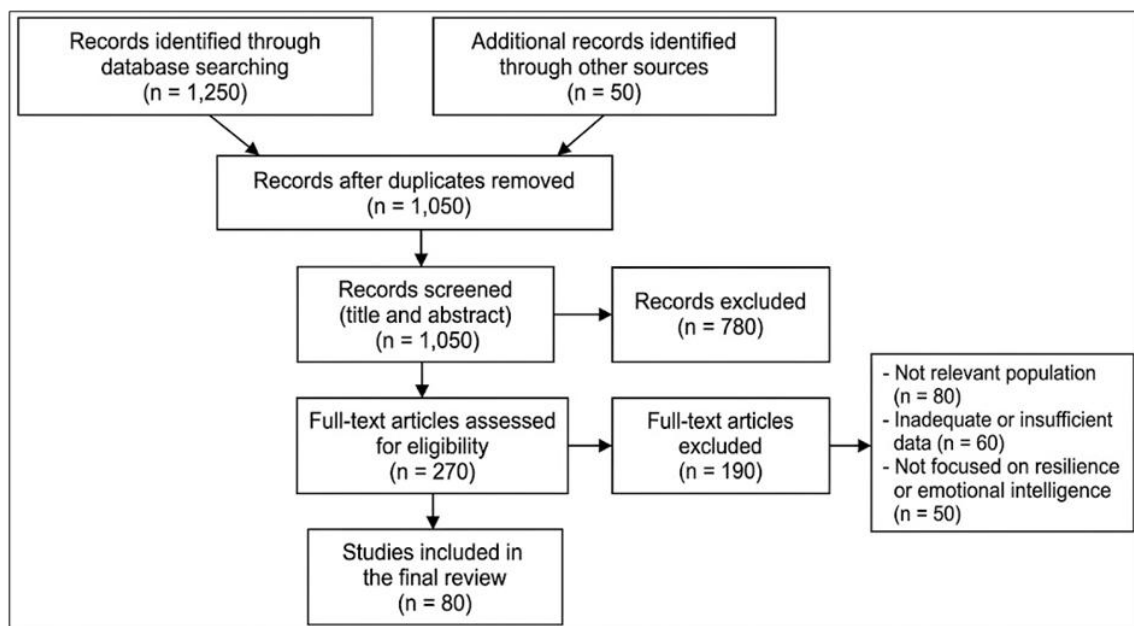


Figure 1. Study selection and data extraction method.

The combined effect of resilience and EI was found to be more significant than either factor alone. Healthcare professionals possessing both high resilience and high EI demonstrated greater psychological well-being, reduced stress, and improved professional functioning. This synergy underscores the importance of adopting an integrated approach when designing interventions aimed at improving mental health. Several intervention-based studies included in the review demonstrated that training programs focused on resilience and emotional intelligence can lead to significant improvements in mental health outcomes. Interventions such as mindfulness training, stress management programs, emotional skills training, and

resilience-building workshops were found to reduce burnout, anxiety, and stress levels among healthcare professionals. Organizational interventions also played a critical role. Supportive leadership, mentoring systems, peer support programs, and positive workplace environments were identified as key factors in enhancing both resilience and EI. These findings suggest that both individual-level and organizational-level strategies are essential for promoting mental well-being. This systematic review synthesized evidence from 80 studies to examine the role of resilience and emotional intelligence (EI) as predictors of mental health among healthcare professionals. The findings consistently indicate that both resilience and

EI are significantly associated with improved psychological outcomes, including reduced burnout, stress, anxiety, and depression, and enhanced well-being and job satisfaction (Labrague, 2021; Shanafelt *et al.*, 2022). Resilience was identified as a key protective factor across diverse healthcare settings. Studies included in this review demonstrated that healthcare professionals with higher resilience levels were better able to cope with occupational stressors and maintain psychological stability (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Mealer *et al.*, 2017). This finding is consistent with prior systematic reviews, which report that resilience mitigates emotional exhaustion and enhances adaptive coping strategies (Robertson *et al.*, 2015). The role of resilience became particularly evident in studies conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, where it functioned as a buffer against extreme workplace stress, uncertainty, and emotional burden (Lai *et al.*, 2020; Shanafelt *et al.*, 2022). These findings reinforce the conceptualization of resilience as a dynamic and modifiable construct that can be strengthened through targeted interventions.

Similarly, emotional intelligence emerged as a significant predictor of mental health. High EI was associated with better emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and stress management (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995). Healthcare professionals with higher EI reported lower levels of burnout and greater job satisfaction (Por *et al.*, 2011; Martins *et al.*, 2010). These findings support existing theoretical frameworks suggesting that emotionally intelligent individuals are better equipped to navigate complex social interactions and emotionally demanding situations inherent in healthcare environments. Importantly, this review highlights the interactive and complementary relationship between resilience and emotional intelligence. Several studies reported that EI enhances resilience by promoting effective emotional regulation and cognitive appraisal, while resilience facilitates the application of emotional competencies under stress (Drigas & Papoutsis, 2018; Armstrong *et al.*, 2011). The combined effect of these constructs appears to provide a stronger protective mechanism against psychological distress than either factor alone (Labrague *et al.*, 2022). This integrated perspective underscores the importance of multidimensional approaches to mental health promotion.

Intervention studies included in this review further support these findings, demonstrating that programs targeting resilience and EI such as mindfulness-based interventions, stress management training, and emotional skills development—are effective in reducing burnout and improving psychological well-being (West *et al.*, 2016; Sood *et al.*, 2011). However, the heterogeneity in intervention design, duration, and outcome measures limits the ability to draw definitive conclusions regarding the most effective strategies. Despite the overall consistency of findings, several methodological limitations were identified across the included studies. The predominance of cross-sectional designs restricts causal inference, and the reliance on self-reported measures introduces the potential for response bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Additionally,

variability in measurement tools for resilience, EI, and mental health outcomes may affect comparability across studies.

CONCLUSION

This systematic review provides robust evidence that resilience and emotional intelligence are significant predictors of mental health among healthcare professionals. Both constructs independently and interactively contribute to reducing psychological distress and enhancing well-being and professional functioning (Labrague, 2021; Drigas & Papoutsis, 2018). The findings highlight the importance of adopting a multidimensional and integrated approach to mental health promotion in healthcare settings. Strengthening resilience and emotional intelligence through targeted interventions and supportive organizational strategies is essential for addressing the growing mental health challenges faced by healthcare professionals (West *et al.*, 2016; WHO, 2022). Future research and policy efforts should focus on developing and implementing evidence-based interventions to sustain a healthy and resilient healthcare workforce.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no conflict of interest

ETHICS APPROVAL

Not applicable

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AI TOOL DECLARATION

The authors declares that no AI and related tools are used to write the scientific content of this manuscript.

DATA AVAILABILITY

Data will be available on request

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