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Leading Through Uncertainty: How Leadership Agility Influences Organizational Resilience and Performance

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Abstract

Organizations facing uncertainty must interpret incomplete information, coordinate responses and protect performance while preserving their capacity to adapt. This conceptual paper develops a framework explaining how leadership agility may contribute to organizational resilience and performance. A focused, non-systematic synthesis integrates selected leadership, resilience and dynamic capabilities literature, comparing concepts, findings and contextual limitations. The framework proposes that leaders' sensing, revisable decisions, coordination and learning may become shared organizational routines supporting anticipation, coping and adaptation. Organizational resilience may connect leadership agility with performance, while a direct leadership–performance pathway remains possible. Six propositions address these relationships, differences across performance outcomes and time horizons, and the roles of environmental uncertainty and resource availability. The paper contributes a leader-to-collective explanation of resilience and distinguishes continuity during disruption from recovery and longer-term renewal. Practical implications concern decision authority, information sharing, routine development and balanced performance assessment. The study collects no primary data and does not test causal effects; its propositions require longitudinal and multilevel investigation. Purposive source selection and incomplete full-text access

limit the synthesis, which should be interpreted as a theory-building argument rather than an exhaustive review or an empirically validated model.

Keywords: leadership agility; organizational resilience; organizational performance; uncertainty; dynamic capabilities; conceptual framework

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Technological disruption, changing stakeholder expectations and unexpected events require leaders to interpret incomplete information, mobilize people and revise decisions while organizations maintain essential operations. Leadership agility is understood here as the capacity to adjust thinking and action while preserving direction and accountability; its value depends on judgment and coordination rather than speed alone. Organizational resilience concerns anticipation, coping and adaptation, including changes to routines or resources when previous arrangements become inadequate (Duchek, 2020). These capabilities depend on collective practices, distributed expertise and organizational arrangements as well as leadership.

Performance under uncertainty includes continuity, recovery and longer-term outcomes, which may involve competing costs and benefits. This paper examines how leadership agility may relate to performance directly and indirectly through resilience. Dynamic capabilities theory provides a foundation for understanding how organizations recognize change and reconfigure resources (Teece et al., 1997; Teece, 2007). Leaders may support these processes by shaping attention, priorities and coordination, but their actions must become shared routines before they constitute organizational capability. The proposed framework therefore distinguishes individual practices from collective resilience and considers how outcomes may vary across contexts and time horizons.

1.2 Problem Statement

The practical problem is that leadership action under uncertainty must move beyond an individual decision to become a coordinated organizational response. A leader may notice a

threat and change priorities, but the response can still fail if information is not shared, employees lack authority, or resources cannot be redeployed. Existing research provides evidence for related links between leadership, agility, resilience and performance; nevertheless, the relationships differ in their levels of analysis, organizational settings and performance measures. The conceptual challenge is to specify how leadership agility may translate into resilience and when resilience may contribute to outcomes without assuming that the process is automatic (Tandon et al., 2025; Duchek, 2020).

1.3 Research Gaps

Gap 1: Conceptual Clarity - Leadership agility requires clearer distinction from related leadership and organisational agility concepts (Tandon et al., 2025).

Gap 2: Leadership and Resilience - How agile leadership actions become shared routines supporting anticipation, coping and adaptation requires further explanation (Duchek, 2020; Wu & Yusuf, 2026).

Gap 3: Performance Pathways - Leadership agility's direct and resilience-mediated relationships with performance over time require further conceptual integration (Diaz & Avolio, 2026; Chang et al., 2026).

Gap 4: Contextual Conditions - How uncertainty and resource availability shape the leadership agility–resilience relationship requires further theorisation (Duchek, 2020; Diaz & Avolio, 2026).

Gap 5: Integrated Framework - An integrated explanation of leadership agility, resilience stages, performance timing and contextual conditions requires further development (Duchek, 2020; Wu & Yusuf, 2026).

1.4 Research Aim, Objectives and Questions

Research aim

The aim of this paper is to develop a conceptual framework explaining how leadership agility may contribute directly and indirectly through organisational resilience to organisational performance under conditions of uncertainty.

Research objectives

RO1: To clarify leadership agility and distinguish it from adaptive leadership, strategic agility and organisational agility.

RO2: To explain how leaders' agile actions may become shared organisational routines supporting anticipation, coping and adaptation.

RO3: To examine the proposed direct relationship between leadership agility and organisational performance, the indirect pathway through organisational resilience, and how resilience–performance relationships may vary over time.

RO4: To explain how environmental uncertainty and resource availability may influence the relationship between leadership agility and organisational resilience.

RO5: To integrate the proposed relationships into a conceptual framework and develop propositions for future empirical investigation.

Research questions

RQ1: How can leadership agility be distinguished from adaptive leadership, strategic agility and organisational agility?

RQ2: How may leaders' agile actions become shared organisational routines supporting anticipation, coping and adaptation?

RQ3: How may leadership agility contribute directly and indirectly through organisational resilience to organisational performance, and how might resilience–performance relationships vary over time?

RQ4: How might environmental uncertainty and resource availability influence the relationship between leadership agility and organisational resilience?

RQ5: How can these relationships be integrated into a conceptual framework and propositions for future empirical investigation?

1.5 Scope of the Study

The paper is a theory-building conceptual study applicable across organizational settings. It synthesizes the selected academic literature rather than collecting new primary data. Its main level of outcome analysis is the organization, while leadership practices are treated as a potential

leader-level antecedent. Environmental uncertainty and resource availability are considered boundary conditions, not variables measured in this paper. The proposed framework and propositions are therefore intended for subsequent assessment rather than presented as verified findings.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Leadership Agility in an Uncertain Environment

Leadership agility concerns leaders' capacity to interpret change, revise decisions and mobilize coordinated action while maintaining strategic purpose. It includes cognitive flexibility, openness to evidence and willingness to reconsider assumptions. Its defining feature is appropriate adjustment rather than impulsiveness, constant change or adherence to one leadership style. Leaders may combine directive responses during emergencies with participation when distributed expertise is required. This paper synthesizes five dimensions: contextual sensing, adaptive decision-making, mobilization and coordination, empowerment with accountability, and learning-oriented reflection.

Tandon et al. (2025) organize leadership agility around mindsets, competencies, styles and organizational functions, whereas Mahapatra et al. (2025), studying 11 Indian executives, identify inward and outward dimensions. The review maps the field; the qualitative study provides contextual depth without establishing generalizable effects. These contributions support conceptual development, but leadership agility remains distinct from an established measurement scale in this paper. Table 1 differentiates the focal construct from related concepts.

Table 1. *Leadership agility compared with related concepts*

Concept	Primary focus	Distinction
Leadership agility	Leader interpretation, adjustment and mobilization	Leader-level practices
Adaptive leadership	Leadership responses to changing challenges	Related leadership approach
Strategic agility	Strategic renewal and resource commitments	Organization-level strategy
Organizational agility	Collective responsiveness and flexibility	Organization-level capability
Organizational resilience	Anticipation, coping and adaptation under adversity	Capacity addressing disruption

2.2 Organizational Resilience: Anticipation, Coping and Adaptation

Organizational resilience involves maintaining functioning, recovering from disruption and adapting when established arrangements become inadequate (Burnard & Bhamra, 2011; Lengnick-Hall & Beck, 2005). Duchek (2020) distinguishes anticipation, coping and adaptation: identifying threats and preparing responses, acting during disruption, and learning through subsequent change. Resilience extends beyond robustness, continuity planning and crisis management by incorporating learning and renewal. Leaders may encourage early reporting, diverse interpretations, clear priorities and coordinated responses, but resilience requires collective capability. Employee competencies and organizational practices help translate individual contributions into preparation, response and learning (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011). Accordingly, resilience cannot be inferred solely from leaders' personal composure or responsiveness.

2.3 Organizational Performance Under Uncertainty

Organizational performance reflects the achievement of objectives relevant to stakeholders, including financial results, operational reliability, innovation and employee outcomes. Leadership agility and resilience are proposed influences rather than sufficient conditions for success (Li et al., 2026; Ilseven &

Puranam, 2021). Performance indicators should match the relevant time horizon: continuity and losses during disruption, restoration time and recovery quality afterwards, and innovation, stakeholder confidence and financial outcomes over longer periods. Li et al. (2026) examine short- and long-term performance, while Ilseven and Puranam (2021) highlight measurement challenges. These distinctions caution against treating one indicator as a complete measure of resilience or performance.

2.4 Leadership Agility and Organizational Resilience

Wu and Yusuf (2026) examine leadership agility and institutional resilience among 445 Chinese higher-education administrators, identifying digital readiness and strategic adaptation as mediating pathways. Latukha (2025) considers adaptive leadership and resilience across individual, team and organizational levels in Russian companies. Differences in constructs, contexts and analytical levels constrain direct comparison and do not establish the stage-specific causal sequence proposed here.

The proposed mechanism concerns converting leadership actions into shared routines. During anticipation, leaders may encourage reporting and assign monitoring responsibilities; during coping, priorities and delegated authority may support coordinated responses; during adaptation, reviews must produce procedural changes and reassessment. These transitions depend on information sharing, understood responsibilities and implementation capacity. Misleading interpretations, conflicting decisions or repeated reprioritization can undermine coordination. Organizational readiness, employee expertise and crisis experience may also explain both leadership behaviour and resilience. Consequently, individual perceptions require careful interpretation, and future studies should trace actions, collective routines and outcomes over time before attributing organizational resilience to leadership agility.

2.5 Organizational Resilience, Performance and Contextual Influences

Diaz and Avolio (2026), examining 241 Peruvian firms, identify indirect strategic

agility–performance pathways through resilience and business model innovation. Chang et al. (2026) examine time-lagged resilience–performance pathways through innovation capabilities, while Iftikhar et al. (2021) synthesize resilience antecedents and outcomes largely within supply-chain research. These studies establish that mediation and temporal analysis already feature in the literature; their findings do not directly test the proposed leadership-to-routine sequence. Diaz and Avolio (2026) also find no anticipated moderation by environmental dynamism, cautioning against universal contextual predictions. Dynamic capabilities theory integrates competence development and reconfiguration (Teece et al., 1997) with sensing, seizing and transforming (Teece, 2007). Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) emphasize market variation, while Teece et al. (2016) connect capabilities with organizational agility. This paper treats organizational agility as related, not a separate mediator, and proposes that leadership supports resilience through shared responsibilities, coordinated resources and revised routines, subject to environmental uncertainty and relevant organizational resource availability (Duchek, 2020; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011).

3. Theoretical Foundation

3.1 Dynamic Capabilities Perspective

Dynamic capabilities theory explains how organizations integrate, build and reconfigure competencies in changing environments (Teece et al., 1997). Sensing, seizing and transforming support adaptation through opportunity recognition, resource commitment and organizational renewal (Teece, 2007). Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) emphasize that capabilities vary with market dynamism. Leadership agility may support these processes through contextual awareness, adaptive decisions, coordination and learning, but individual agility does not automatically become organizational capability. Its contribution depends on structures, employee expertise and collective implementation. Organizational agility remains a related capability rather than a separate mediator in this framework (Teece et

al., 2016), which proposes relationships between leadership agility, organizational resilience and performance under uncertainty.

3.2 Leadership Agility as a Source of Organizational Adaptation

Leadership agility may provide a micro foundation for adaptation when leaders' sensing, decisions and learning become shared routines (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece, 2007; Teece et al., 1997). The proposed mechanism involves interpreting signals, communicating priorities and authority, coordinating resources, and incorporating feedback into procedures. A supplier warning, for example, supports collective capability when monitoring, alternative sourcing and escalation responsibilities are established. Leadership practices, organizational resilience and performance remain distinct constructs. Excessive reprioritization, conflicting interpretations and rapid decisions may undermine coordination or scrutiny. Employees and existing structures can also initiate adaptation; therefore, leadership is neither necessary nor sufficient, and its proposed contribution requires investigation across organizational levels and time (Teece, 2007; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011).

3.3 Organizational Resilience as a Dynamic Capability

Resilience can be viewed through a capability lens when an organization develops recurring ways to anticipate, cope and adapt. Duchek (2020) treats these capabilities as interrelated components of resilience, while Lengnick-Hall et al. (2011) explain how employee contributions and organizational practices can support resilience. The conceptual position adopted here does not assume that every resilience activity is a dynamic capability. Rather, it asks how sustained patterns of preparation, coordinated response and learning may contribute to reconfiguration under disruption.

3.4 Integration of Leadership Agility, Resilience and Performance

The integrated argument links different levels and time horizons. Leadership agility may influence the attention and coordination required for resilience. Organizational resilience may then protect operations during disturbance and support recovery or renewal later. Performance is a proposed outcome, not a defining element of leadership agility. Contextual conditions may shape the conversion of individual action into collective capability. The model also allows a direct leadership–performance pathway, recognizing that decisions may affect outcomes without operating entirely through resilience (Doz & Kosonen, 2010; Diaz & Avolio, 2026).

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study uses a conceptual, narrative synthesis to develop a theory-informed framework. It draws on the reference set previously identified for the topic and selected foundational sources already included in the existing draft. For further research in this area, interviews, surveys, experiments or statistical analyses have to be conducted. The approach integrates conceptual and empirical contributions to clarify constructs, compare relationships and formulate propositions.

4.2 Literature Selection

The literature base consists of papers selected for relevance to leadership agility or adjacent leadership approaches, organizational resilience, dynamic capabilities, agility and performance. The sources include conceptual articles, reviews and empirical studies in different settings. Selection was purposive and based on topic relevance; some sources were assessed through abstracts or publication records because full texts were not accessible. A reproducible database search protocol, screening log and comprehensive count of all potentially eligible studies were not established. Consequently, the synthesis cannot support claims of exhaustive

coverage or a definitive absence of prior research.

Table 2. *Composition of the literature Selection*

Stream	Illustrative sources	Contribution
Leadership agility	Mahapatra et al.; Tandon et al.; Wu and Yusuf	Conceptualization and leadership–resilience links
Resilience	Duchek; Burnard and Bhamra; Lengnick-Hall et al.	Processes and capabilities
Agility and performance	Doz and Kosonen; Diaz and Avolio	Strategic adaptation and outcomes
Performance and evaluation	Li et al.; Iftikhar et al.; Ilseven and Puranam	Time horizons and measurement
Dynamic capabilities	Teece; Teece et al.	Theoretical integration

4.3 Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeded by defining the conceptual scope, selecting relevant available sources, comparing definitions and findings, and integrating the resulting arguments into a framework. Concepts were compared by their level of analysis, relationship to disruption and proposed outcome. The literature was then organized around leadership, resilience stages, performance timing and contextual conditions. Alternative explanations and potentially adverse effects were retained in the discussion. This procedure is a transparent description of conceptual development; it should not be read as a completed formal systematic coding exercise.

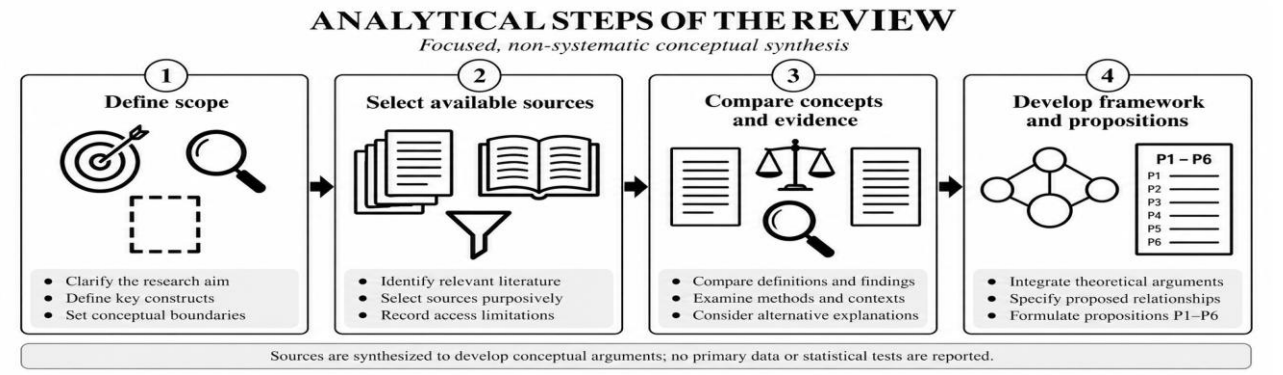


Figure 1. Analytical steps of the review.

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4.4 Proposition Development

Propositions were developed by combining the dynamic capabilities perspective with the selected literature and specifying directional relationships that future research can challenge. The reasoning distinguishes an association supported in prior studies from a proposed causal mechanism. Six propositions cover leadership and resilience, resilience and performance, a direct relationship, mediation, differences in timing, and contextual conditions. The framework is an analytical model, not a statistical result or an empirically validated intervention.

5. Proposed Conceptual Framework

5.1 Leadership Agility Across Resilience Stages

Figure 2 illustrates how leadership actions may become shared routines supporting anticipation, coping and adaptation. Duchek (2020) provides the resilience-stage model, while Wu and Yusuf (2026) offer related evidence linking leadership agility with institutional resilience; neither establishes the complete stage-specific mechanism proposed here. The stages may overlap, recur or fail to develop because of misleading signals, conflicting responses or ineffective learning. Organizational readiness, employee expertise and crisis experience provide alternative explanations that future longitudinal studies should examine.

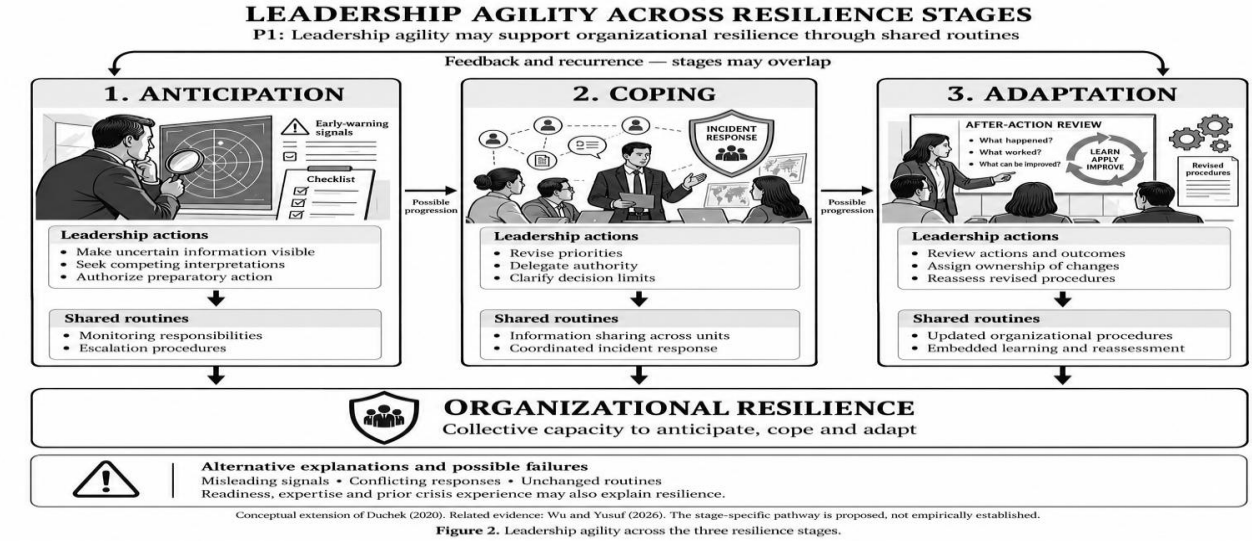


Figure 2. Leadership agility across the three resilience stages.

Proposition 1 (P1): Leadership agility is positively associated with organizational resilience through practices supporting anticipation, coping and adaptation.

5.2 Leadership Agility, Resilience and Performance

Resilience may protect performance through continuity, recovery and renewal, although preparedness costs and resource diversion can weaken its benefits. Resilience capabilities should therefore be measured separately from performance outcomes to avoid circular reasoning (Li et al., 2026; Ilseven & Puranam, 2021). Direct and indirect pathways may coexist: leadership decisions can influence performance immediately, while shared routines may contribute through resilience. Related research informs these arguments but does not establish the proposed leadership-level mechanisms (Diaz & Avolio, 2026; Rauniar & Cao, 2025). Testing requires distinct measures, temporal ordering and consideration of leader experience, existing capabilities and concurrent strategic changes.

Proposition 2 (P2): Organizational resilience is positively associated with organizational performance when anticipation, coping and adaptation support continuity, recovery or renewal.

Proposition 3 (P3): Leadership agility may be positively associated with organizational performance through decisions and coordination not fully explained by resilience.

Proposition 4 (P4): Organizational resilience may mediate the relationship between leadership agility and organizational performance.

5.3 Expected Timing of Performance Effects

Figure 3 distinguishes performance during disruption, recovery and longer-term renewal. These horizons represent a conceptual argument rather than an empirical trajectory. Previous studies examine temporal differences and innovation pathways, providing a foundation for connecting resilience stages with performance timing (Li et al., 2026; Chang et al., 2026). Changes in demand, resources and post-crisis investment remain competing explanations.

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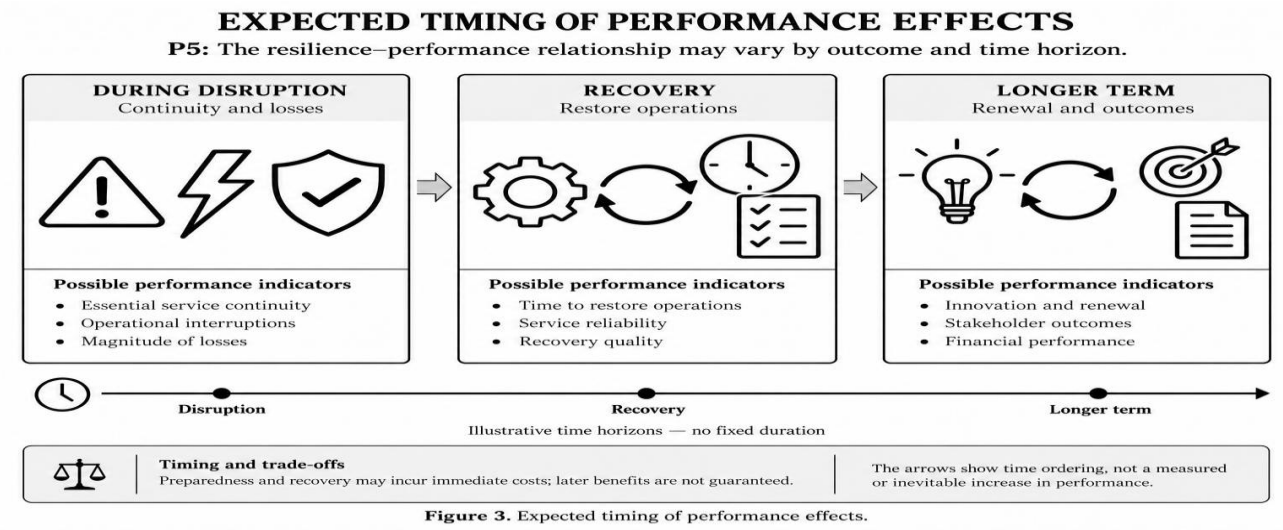


Figure 3. Expected timing of performance effects.

Proposition 5 (P5): The relationship between organizational resilience and performance differs across disruption, recovery and longer-term periods and across performance indicators.

5.4 Overall Framework, Propositions and Contextual Conditions

Figure 4 integrates P1–P6. Environmental uncertainty and resource availability separately qualify the leadership agility–resilience relationship: uncertainty can encourage adaptation or overwhelm interpretation, while resources enable implementation without guaranteeing effective use. Their influence should therefore be examined separately without assuming uniformly positive moderation (Diaz & Avolio, 2026; Duchek, 2020).

Proposition 6 (P6): The association between leadership agility and organizational resilience varies according to environmental uncertainty and organizational resource availability.

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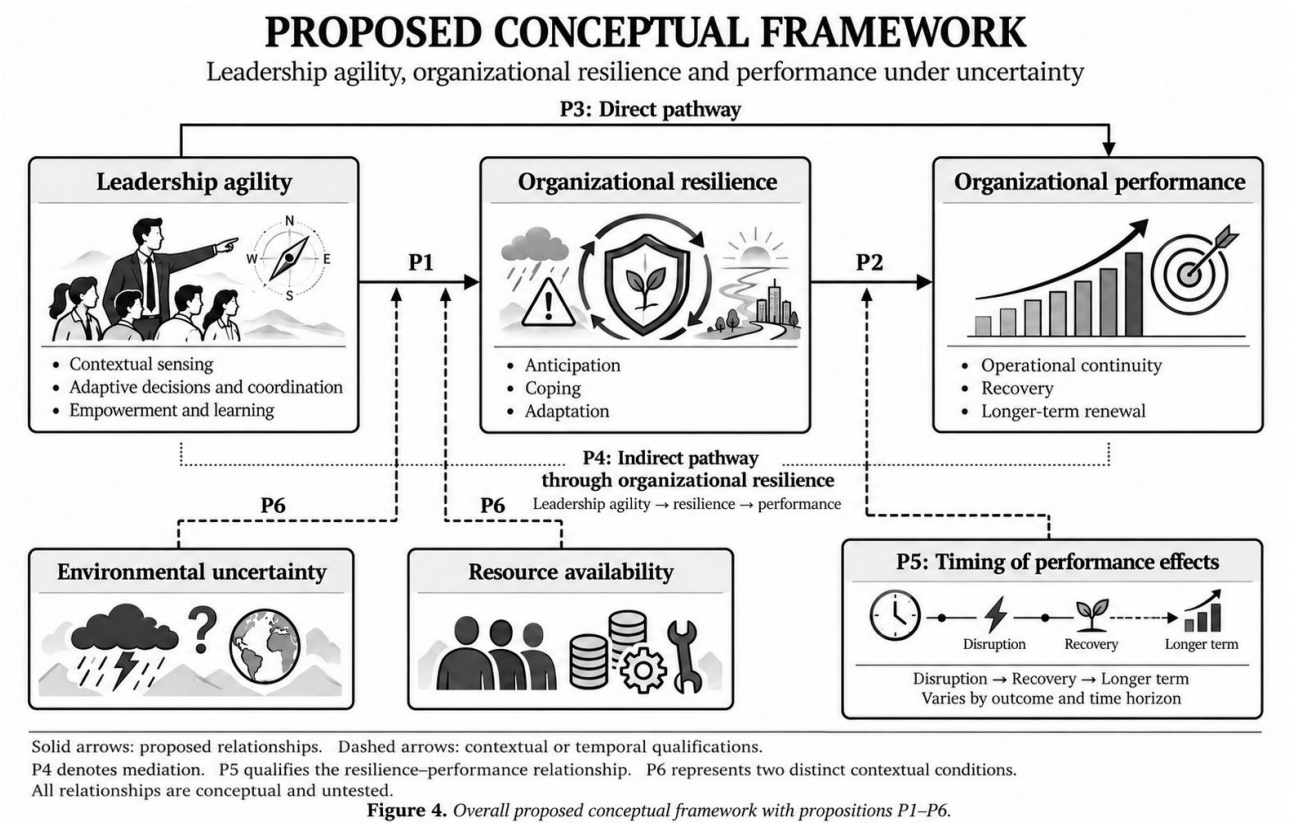


Figure 4. *Overall proposed conceptual framework with propositions P1–P6.*

Note. P1–P3 label direct conceptual paths; P4 is the indirect path through resilience. P5 specifies differences in the P2 association by performance outcome and time horizon. P6 concerns variation in P1 associated separately with environmental uncertainty and resource availability. Arrows represent propositions, not verified effects.

Table 3. *Propositions, rationale and supporting literature*

Proposition	Proposed relationship and rationale	Illustrative sources
P1	Leadership agility supports resilience across stages	Wu and Yusuf (2026); Duchek (2020)
P2	Resilience supports performance, subject to outcomes and costs	Li et al. (2026); Iftikhar et al. (2021)
P3	Leadership agility may influence performance directly	Rauniar and Cao (2025), examining related leadership
P4	Resilience may mediate leadership agility–performance	Diaz and Avolio (2026), examining strategic agility
P5	Resilience–performance relationships vary over time and across indicators	Li et al. (2026); Chang et al. (2026)
P6	Uncertainty and resources separately qualify P1	Duchek (2020); Diaz and Avolio (2026)

6. Discussion and Implications

6.1 Discussion

This framework extends rather than replaces existing explanations. Wu and Yusuf (2026) examine leadership agility and institutional resilience with digital readiness and strategic adaptation; Diaz and Avolio (2026) test organization-level strategic agility and resilience as a performance pathway; Chang et al. (2026) examine time-lagged resilience and innovation. The present synthesis contributes a proposed sequence connecting leader actions with collective routines across Duchek's (2020) resilience stages and distinguishes performance outcomes by time horizon. Its distinctive value depends on demonstrating those intermediate mechanisms, not on presenting resilience mediation or temporal analysis as new. The framework also makes room for alternative explanations: existing organizational capabilities may enable both agile leaders and resilience, while frequent reprioritization, incomplete information or resource constraints

may weaken the proposed pathway. Its propositions are theoretical arguments that require independent testing.

6.2 Implications

For theory, the paper suggests that researchers specify the level at which agility is measured, the organizational mechanisms through which leadership acts and the time horizon of performance. For practice, it suggests examining whether leaders have access to diverse information, whether teams understand decision authority, and whether lessons from disruptions change routines. Leadership development could combine scenario exercises, delegated decision-making and structured reviews with investment in organizational coordination. Managers may use continuity, recovery and longer-term indicators to assess outcomes instead of relying on response speed alone. These implications follow from the conceptual argument and are not evidence that a particular training programme or governance arrangement will improve performance in every context.

7. Limitations and Future Research

7.1 Limitations

The paper is a conceptual synthesis and provides no empirical tests of its propositions. Its purposive source selection has to be more systematic, and access restrictions meant that some sources could be assessed only through abstracts or publication records; full-text claim verification remains limited. The selected studies span settings, constructs and levels that are not directly interchangeable. The proposed framework does not isolate leadership from prior organizational capabilities, resource constraints or other plausible causes. Performance and resilience can also overlap operationally, creating a risk of circular measurement. The contextual conditions and performance horizons are theoretical simplifications and no claim of universal applicability.

7.2 Future Research

Future studies can develop and validate distinct measures of leader-level agility and organization-level resilience, then test direct and

indirect paths using multiple respondents and independent performance indicators. Longitudinal designs could observe anticipation, coping and adaptation before, during and after a disruption. Comparative studies across sectors, countries, disruption types and resource conditions could investigate boundary conditions, including possible trade-offs between speed and decision quality. Qualitative process studies could examine how leadership decisions become routines, while multilevel designs could assess how leader, team and organizational behaviours' interact.

8. Conclusion

This paper develops a conceptual framework explaining how leadership agility may contribute to organizational resilience and performance under uncertainty. It argues that leaders can potentially influence anticipation, coping and adaptation by shaping attention, decisions, coordination and learning. Organizational resilience may support continuity, recovery and renewal and may connect leadership practices with performance, while a direct leadership–performance relationship remains possible. The expected outcomes differ across measures and time periods, and their realization depends on conditions such as uncertainty and resources. The six propositions are an invitation to empirical inquiry rather than verified findings. By distinguishing leader-level actions from organizational capability and linking resilience stages to performance timing, the framework offers a basis for more precise research and thoughtful organizational practice.

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