

# WOMEN BUILDING RESILIENCE: STRENGTHENING ORGANIZATIONS

*A Framework for Gender-Responsive Organisational Excellence*

## Abstract

This paper examines the critical role of women in building organisational resilience and presents a comprehensive framework linking women's empowerment, corporate governance, and organisational strength. Drawing on extensive literature on gender diversity in leadership, the study explores how women's participation in executive roles and board positions contributes to greater organisational resilience during turbulent times. The research proposes a gender-responsive resilience framework that integrates individual resilience capabilities with organisational support systems, emphasising the transformative potential of inclusive cultures. The findings suggest that organisations with higher representation of women in leadership positions demonstrate superior crisis management, adaptive capacity, and sustainable performance. This paper contributes to the discourse on corporate governance effectiveness in the Indian context. It offers actionable insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to leverage gender diversity to achieve organisational excellence.

## INTRODUCTION

In an era characterised by unprecedented global challenges—from economic volatility to social disruptions—organisational resilience has emerged as a critical determinant of long-term success. Resilience, defined as an organisation's capacity to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and adapt to disruptions, is increasingly recognised as essential for sustainable competitive advantage.



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Within this context, the role of women in building and sustaining organisational resilience warrants focused examination.

Recent evidence suggests that gender diversity in leadership positions correlates with superior organisational outcomes, particularly during crisis periods. Organisations with balanced gender representation demonstrate enhanced decision-making, broader stakeholder perspectives, and greater adaptability. Despite progressive corporate governance provisions mandating women on boards, significant questions remain about their effectiveness and how gender diversity translates into organisational strength.

This paper addresses this gap by developing an integrated framework that connects women's empowerment, corporate governance practices, and organisational resilience within a culturally contextualised setting. By examining these interconnections, we aim to provide both theoretical insights and practical guidance for organisations seeking to harness the full potential of gender diversity.

### 1. Research Objectives

This study pursues three primary objectives:

- ⦿ To analyse women's role in building organisational resilience and its strategic significance.
- ⦿ To assess the impact of women directors and governance provisions on organisational resilience in India.
- ⦿ To develop a framework linking women's empowerment, governance, and resilience strategies in cultural contexts.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The intersection of gender diversity, organisational resilience, and corporate governance has garnered substantial scholarly attention. This review synthesises key findings across three thematic areas: the individual resilience of women leaders, organisational resilience mechanisms, and the role of corporate governance in enabling gender diversity.

### 1. Women's Resilience in Leadership

Women leaders demonstrate distinctive resilience that contributes to organisational strength. Research by Pillay-Naidoo and Nel (2022) establishes that cognitive assets (self-efficacy and mindfulness), emotional assets (positive affect and self-regulation), and behavioural assets (problem-solving abilities and authentic functioning) collectively explain variance in female leaders' resilience. These multidimensional capabilities enable women to transform adversity into organisational advancement.

Studies examining women entrepreneurs reveal that resilience-building is both gendered and contextual. Bagheri et al. (2024) demonstrate that women entrepreneurs employ diverse problem-based and emotion-based coping mechanisms to develop both business and entrepreneurial resilience, particularly during crises. Their research highlights that emotional regulation and resource optimisation (bootstrapping)

are critical adaptive strategies.

### 2. Organisational Benefits of Gender Diversity

Yang et al. (2023) provide empirical evidence from 1,755 Chinese firms that organisations with higher proportions of female executives experience lower crisis-related losses and faster recovery. This finding underscores the practical utility of gender diversity in executive teams for enhancing organisational resilience. Similarly, Joseph et al. (2022) demonstrate that organisational culture, rather than leadership alone, determines crisis outcomes, emphasising the importance of cultivating a culture of excellence through inclusive practices.

The transformative potential of gender inclusion emerges as a consistent theme. Bridges et al. (2023) propose the Resilience for Gender Inclusion (RGI) model, which illustrates how organisational and employee resilience interact to create inclusive diversity cultures. Their work suggests that individual resilience, while important, has maximum impact only when supported by organisational resilience strategies and gender-inclusion measures.

### 3. Corporate Governance and Structural Barriers

Despite regulatory initiatives promoting board gender diversity, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions. Goyal et al. (2023) examine UK FTSE boards and find that female directors develop resilience through experiential learning—initially employing avoidant coping mechanisms but progressively adopting active coping strategies as tenure increases. This evolution highlights the importance of sustained board participation for realising the full benefits of gender diversity.

Research also identifies persistent barriers. Rahimi and Ahmadi Arpanahi (2024) demonstrate that job flexibility, interaction with work environments, and human resource management measures significantly impact female managers' resilience and their ability to break through glass ceiling constraints. These findings underscore the need for comprehensive organisational support systems beyond formal governance mandates.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopts an exploratory, conceptual methodology. Through systematic review and synthesis of existing literature on women's leadership, organisational resilience, and corporate

governance, we identify key patterns, mechanisms, and relationships. Building on established theories, including upper echelons theory, resilience theory, and social entrepreneurship frameworks, we develop an integrative model that connects women's empowerment with organisational resilience outcomes. While this study does not incorporate primary empirical data, it provides a theoretically grounded framework that can guide future empirical investigations and organisational practice.

## DISCUSSION AND PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

Based on the literature synthesis and identified patterns, we propose an integrated framework for understanding and implementing gender-responsive organisational resilience. This framework connects three critical domains: individual capabilities, organisational systems, and governance structures.

### 1. Framework Components

**The proposed framework integrates four interdependent layers:**

Framework Layer	Key Elements
<b>Individual Resilience</b>	Cognitive assets (self-efficacy, mindfulness); Emotional assets (self-regulation, positive affect); Behavioural assets (problem-solving, authentic functioning); Adaptive coping mechanisms
<b>Organizational Support</b>	Job flexibility; Supportive work environments; Human resource management practices; Culture of excellence; Social support systems (financial, informational, emotional)
<b>Governance Mechanisms</b>	Board diversity mandates; Gender-responsive policies; Inclusive recruitment and promotion; Leadership development programs; Mentorship and sponsorship initiatives
<b>Cultural Context</b>	Sociocultural norms and values; Industry-specific dynamics; Regulatory environment; Stakeholder expectations; Community and family support structures

*Table 1: Integrated Framework for Gender-Responsive Organisational Resilience*

*Source -Authors own*

### 2. Framework Application in Practice

Organisations seeking to enhance resilience through gender diversity should adopt a multi-level approach. At the individual level, investment in women's leadership development focusing on resilience competencies—cognitive flexibility, emotional intelligence, and adaptive problem-solving—builds foundational capacity. Organisational systems must then amplify these individual strengths through flexible work arrangements, inclusive cultures, and comprehensive support structures.

Governance mechanisms provide the structural framework ensuring sustained commitment to gender diversity. Beyond compliance with board diversity mandates, effective governance requires actively cultivating a talent pipeline, transparent progression pathways, and accountability mechanisms. The cultural layer recognises that resilience-building strategies must align with sociocultural contexts, acknowledging that effective approaches may vary across regions and industries.

Successful implementation requires attention to all layers of the framework simultaneously. Organisations that focus solely on governance compliance, without addressing cultural norms or providing adequate support systems, are unlikely to realise the full benefits of gender diversity for resilience. Conversely, supportive cultures without formal governance structures may lack the institutional commitment necessary for sustained change.

### 3. Implications for Indian Organisations

In the Indian context, corporate governance provisions mandating the appointment of women directors represent an important first step. However, our framework suggests that regulatory compliance alone is insufficient. Organisations must develop complementary initiatives that address cultural barriers, provide developmental support, and create genuinely inclusive environments where women can fully leverage their resilience.

Evidence from disaster risk reduction in Oman (Abdalla et al., 2024) and entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia (Alhothali & Al-Dajani, 2022) demonstrates that gender-responsive approaches adapted to cultural contexts can successfully enhance resilience. Indian organisations can learn from these examples while acknowledging their unique sociocultural dynamics.

## LIMITATIONS

This study is conceptual and exploratory, drawing primarily on secondary literature rather than original empirical data. While the proposed framework is theoretically grounded, it requires validation through systematic empirical investigation across diverse organisational contexts. Future research should test the framework's applicability in various industries, organisational sizes, and cultural settings. Additionally, longitudinal studies examining the long-term impact of gender-responsive resilience strategies would provide valuable insights into the sustainability and evolution of these practices.

## CONCLUSION

Women's participation in organisational leadership is more than a matter of equity—it is a strategic imperative for building organisational resilience. This paper establishes that women bring distinctive resilience capabilities across cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions, enhancing organisational adaptive capacity. However, realising these benefits requires comprehensive, multi-level interventions that extend beyond governance mandates to encompass cultural transformation and systemic support.

The proposed integrated framework provides a roadmap for organisations seeking to leverage gender diversity for enhanced resilience. By simultaneously addressing individual capabilities, organisational support systems, governance mechanisms, and cultural contexts, organisations can create conditions where women's resilience translates into sustained organisational strength. This approach acknowledges that individual resilience, while necessary, achieves maximum impact only within supportive organisational ecosystems.

For Indian organisations, current corporate governance provisions represent an important foundation. However, moving beyond compliance to authentic inclusion requires deliberate effort to address structural barriers, cultural norms, and support deficits. Organisations that successfully implement comprehensive gender-responsive resilience strategies position themselves not only for enhanced crisis management but also for sustained competitive advantage in increasingly complex business environments.

Future research should empirically validate this framework across diverse contexts, examine the

specific mechanisms by which its components interact, and identify best practices for implementation. As organisations navigate unprecedented challenges, understanding and harnessing the resilience contributions of women leaders will increasingly determine competitive success and organisational sustainability. **MA**

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