



PRISMA ODS
REVISTA MULTIDISCIPLINARIA
SOBRE DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE

ISSN: 3072-8452

**ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE
AND SUSTAINABILITY: THE
ROLE OF PROACTIVE AND
REACTIVE CAPABILITIES IN
UNCERTAIN ENVIRONMENTS**

*RESILIENCIA ORGANIZACIONAL
Y SOSTENIBILIDAD: EL PAPEL DE
LAS CAPACIDADES PROACTIVAS
Y REACTIVAS EN ENTORNOS
INCIERTOS*

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Organizational Resilience and Sustainability: The Role of Proactive and Reactive Capabilities in Uncertain Environments

Resiliencia Organizacional y Sostenibilidad: El Papel de las Capacidades
Proactivas y Reactivas en Entornos Inciertos

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Artículo recibido: 29/11/2025

Aceptado para publicación: 03/01/2026

Conflictos de Intereses: Ninguno que declarar

ABSTRACT

This article presents an extensive review of recent literature on the relationship between organizational resilience, corporate sustainability, and corporate purpose—an emerging field that has gained prominence amid growing global volatility and complexity. Drawing on various theoretical perspectives, including dynamic capabilities theory, sustainability (ESG), supply chain management, and digital transformation, the study examines how organizations develop capabilities for anticipation, absorption, adaptation, and transformation to confront disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions, and technological advancements. The findings indicate that resilience and sustainability form an interdependent system that drives organizational continuity and long-term value creation, while corporate purpose adds a strategic and ethical dimension that guides decision-making. The review also highlights the enabling role of digitalization, digital organizational culture, and management control systems in strengthening these capabilities. Finally, the article identifies theoretical and empirical gaps, proposing future research directions aimed at advancing the integration of the SRP framework (Sustainability, Resilience, and Purpose) and assessing its impact on organizational performance.

Keywords: organizational resilience, corporate sustainability, corporate purpose, digital transformation, supply chain resilience

RESUMEN

Este artículo presenta una revisión exhaustiva de la literatura reciente sobre la relación entre la resiliencia organizacional, la sostenibilidad corporativa y el propósito corporativo, un campo emergente que ha cobrado relevancia ante la creciente volatilidad y complejidad global. A partir de diversas perspectivas teóricas, entre ellas la teoría de las capacidades dinámicas, la sostenibilidad (ESG), la gestión de la cadena de suministro y la transformación digital, el estudio examina cómo las organizaciones desarrollan capacidades de anticipación, absorción, adaptación y transformación para enfrentar disrupciones como la pandemia de COVID-19, las tensiones geopolíticas y los avances tecnológicos. Los hallazgos indican que la resiliencia y la sostenibilidad conforman un sistema interdependiente que impulsa la continuidad organizacional y la creación de valor a largo plazo, mientras que el propósito corporativo aporta una dimensión estratégica y ética que orienta la toma de decisiones. Asimismo, la revisión destaca el rol habilitador de la digitalización, la cultura organizacional digital y los sistemas de control de gestión en el fortalecimiento de estas capacidades. Finalmente, el artículo identifica vacíos teóricos y empíricos, y propone líneas futuras de investigación orientadas a profundizar la integración del marco SRP (Sostenibilidad, Resiliencia y Propósito) y a evaluar su impacto en el desempeño organizacional.

Palabras clave: resiliencia organizacional, sostenibilidad corporativa, propósito corporativo, transformación digital, resiliencia de la cadena de suministro

INTRODUCTION

In a global context characterized by increasing volatility, uncertainty, and accelerated transformations, organizations face challenges that exceed traditional management frameworks. Phenomena such as the COVID-19 pandemic, disruptions in global supply chains, intensive digitalization, and growing social and environmental pressures have highlighted the need to develop capabilities that enable not only resistance to crises but also adaptation and long-term prosperity. In this scenario, the concepts of Organizational Resilience (OR), corporate sustainability, and corporate purpose have gained unprecedented strategic relevance, becoming fundamental pillars for the continuity and competitiveness of contemporary organizations.

Since 2018, literature has experienced significant growth regarding the interrelationship between resilience and sustainability, to the point of forming a multidisciplinary field that integrates perspectives from strategic management, dynamic capabilities theory, sustainability studies, supply chain management, and digital transformation. Organizational resilience is now understood as a set of dynamic capabilities that allow organizations to anticipate risks, absorb impacts, and adapt or transform when facing disruptive events, while corporate sustainability extends this logic toward the pursuit of long-term social, environmental, and economic value. The recent incorporation of corporate purpose as a third component (SRP: Sustainability, Resilience, and Purpose) adds an orienting dimension that links organizational identity with responsible and strategically coherent practices.

Likewise, technological advancements —particularly digitalization, advanced analytics, and artificial intelligence— emerge as essential enablers for strengthening both resilience and sustainability, especially in complex environments and global supply chains. Similarly, the role of Management Control Systems (MCS) becomes increasingly relevant as they provide mechanisms to monitor, coordinate, and align behaviors and decisions under conditions of uncertainty.

Despite these advances, theoretical and empirical gaps remain regarding how resilience, sustainability, and purpose interact, which internal and external factors drive these capabilities, and what methodologies enable the assessment of their impact on organizational performance. Therefore, this article develops a comprehensive review of recent literature to map the main trends, theoretical approaches, methodologies, and empirical findings shaping this emerging field.

Overall, this introduction offers a framework for understanding the strategic importance of integrating resilience, sustainability, and corporate purpose, highlighting their role as essential drivers of competitiveness, operational continuity, and value creation in an increasingly complex global environment.

DEVELOPMENT

Literature review

The Conceptual Framework of Resilience and Sustainability

Contemporary research focuses on the interconnectedness of organizational resilience (OR), corporate sustainability, and, at times, corporate purpose (SRP) (Florez-Jimenez et al., 2024; Neacșu & Georgescu, 2024). This field of study has grown steadily since 2018, driven by disruptive events (Neacșu & Georgescu, 2024), such as COVID-19 (Orlando et al., 2022). with respect to Organizational Resilience (OR), that is a key concept that has been discussed on organizational agendas since 1998 (Mallak, 1998, cited in Corrales-Estrada et al., 2021), gaining sustained interest from 2018 onwards (Linnenluecke, 2017; Ruiz-Martin et al., 2018; Annarelli & Nonino, 2016, cited in Weber et al., 2024). Resilience is understood as the capacity to recover or to incorporate adaptive processes and mechanisms that combine assets and risk factors in a cumulative and interactive pattern (Southwick et al., 2014, cited in Florez-Jimenez et al., 2024).

Regarding to Organizational vulnerability (OR) capabilities are a relevant topic in the literature, contributing 27% of articles and 17% of total citations in certain analyzed bodies of knowledge (Corrales-Estrada et al., 2021). Research has explored how OR relates to Business Continuity Management (BCM), highlighting that organizational vulnerabilities to disruptions lead to BCM practices (Corrales-Estrada et al., 2021). Integrating business continuity and disaster recovery planning requires an integrated approach to managing OR levels (Sahebjamnia et al., 2015, cited in Corrales-Estrada et al., 2021).

SRP Intersection (Sustainability, Resilience and Purpose)

The combination of Sustainability, Resilience, and Purpose (SRP) is a research area that seeks to identify levers for the long-term prosperity of organizations (Florez-Jimenez et al., 2024). There are five main academic traditions: Stakeholder Identification (Roberts & Dutton, 2009, cited in Florez-Jimenez et al., 2024); Strategic Resources (Santos et al., 2014, cited in Florez-

Jimenez et al., 2024); Human and Complex Systems (Mannen et al., 2012; Walker, 2016, cited in Florez-Jimenez et al., 2024); and Multi-Stakeholder Organization. Social Entrepreneurship (Bonfanti et al., 2016, cited in Florez-Jimenez et al., 2024). Therefore, Companies with a clear purpose and a focus on sustainability have a greater probability of long-term survival (Ortiz-de-Mandojana & Bansal, 2016).

Sustainability and Financial Performance.

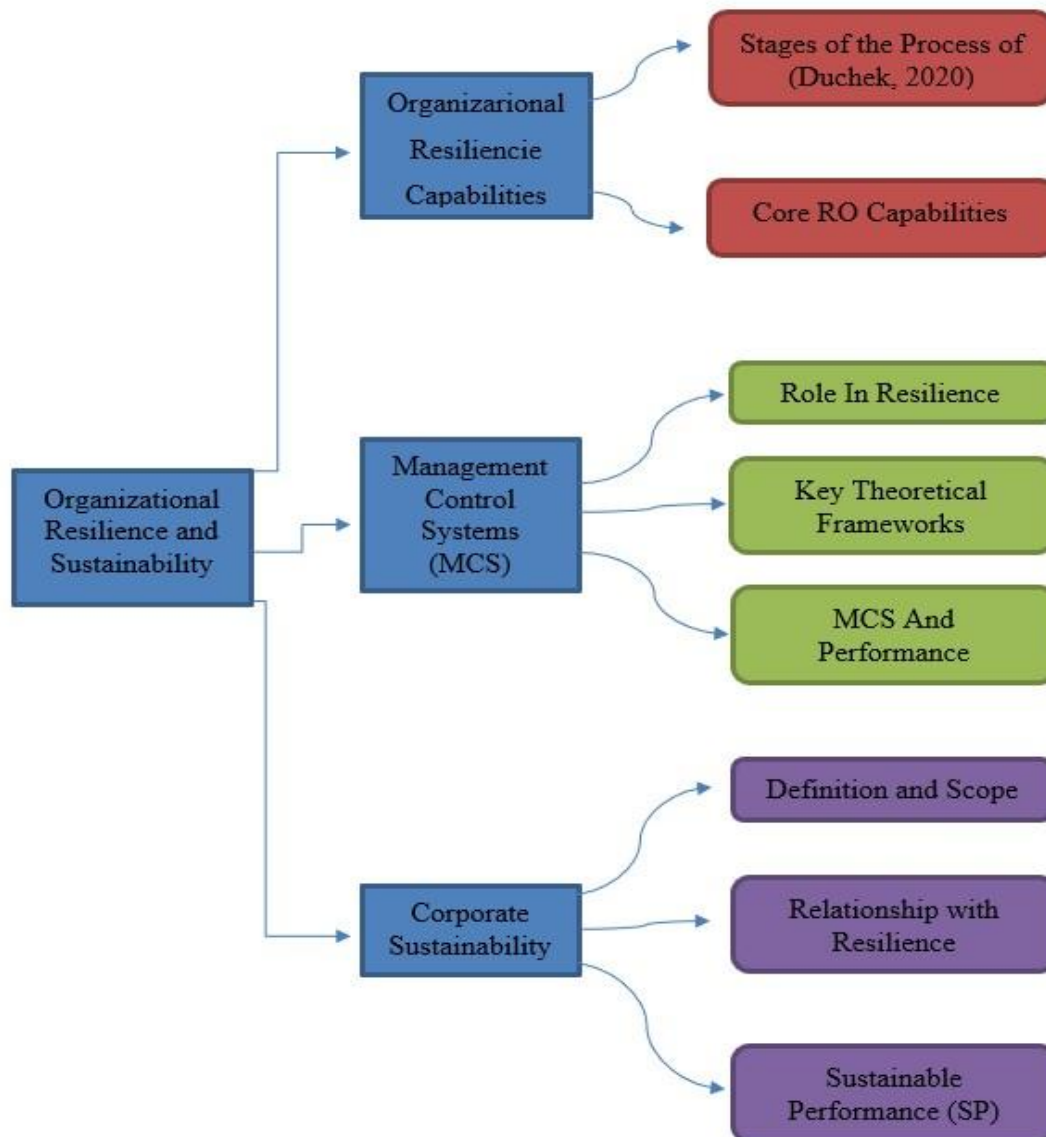
The literature intensively investigates the relationship between financial performance and sustainability in the context of organizational resilience (Neacșu & Georgescu, 2024). Temporal analysis identified three important periods of discussion: 2013–2019 (analysis of corporate sustainability, influenced by seminal works such as Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2013), 2020–2021 (emphasis on resilience due to the COVID-19 pandemic/organizational sustainability), and 2022–2023 (introduction of the concept of organizational resilience) (Neacșu & Georgescu, 2024). Six core research themes have been identified in this area: innovative policies, crisis risk management, sustainable financial performance, corporate responsibility strategy management, sustainable business strategies, and sustainable leadership practices (Neacșu & Georgescu, 2024). Empirical studies are the dominant approach, suggesting a predominantly inductive scientific approach (Neacșu & Georgescu, 2024).

The Impact of Digitalization and the Supply Chain

Digitalization and advanced technologies are crucial for improving resilience and sustainability. Digital Culture and Capabilities; Digital Organizational Culture (DOC), based on dynamic capabilities theory, positively influences Absorptive Capacity (AC), Supply Chain Resilience (SCR), and Sustainable Performance (SP) of manufacturing companies, especially in Mexico (Rodríguez-González et al., 2023). The relationship between DOC and SP is mediated by AC and SCR (Rodríguez-González et al., 2023). Digitalization can reinvent business resilience (Santos et al., 2023), as observed during COVID-19 (Bresciani et al., 2022). Digital technologies are also being explored as enablers for sustainability and innovation (Xie et al., 2022; Annarelli & Palombi, 2021). with regard to Supply Chain Resilience (SCR); Organizational complexity is a factor that affects supply chain resilience, especially in the context of a global paradigm shift where the loss of the dollar as a reference currency can cause inflation and the disruption of globalization (Sánchez et al., 2022). This scenario affects the

ability to achieve low production costs in value chains and economies of scale (Sánchez et al., 2022).

Dominant Research Methodologies are presented, and the studies are based on rigorous methods, both for literature review and data analysis. Literature Review Methods; Systematic literature reviews (SLRs) are often guided by protocols such as the PRISMA guidelines (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) (Page et al., 2021; Denyer & Tranfield, 2009). Methods used include bibliometric analysis and SLRs (Chen, 2017; Marzouk & Elshaboury, 2022; Zupic & Čater, 2015). Science mapping analysis is a key technique used to map the development of scientific fields and visualize knowledge structures (Cobo et al., 2012; Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016; Marzouk & Elshaboury, 2022; Núñez-Merino et al., 2022). on Quantitative and Configurational Methods; the use of two key statistical and configurational approaches is observed, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM): This method is used to test hypotheses and analyze structural models (Hair et al., 2021; Hair et al., 2014; Sarstedt et al., 2021). It is used to verify the reliability of variables with a reliability value greater than the cutoff point of 0.706 (Henseler et al., 2015). Fuzzy Set Comparative Qualitative Analysis (fsQCA): This method is used for asymmetric thinking and the construction of causal theories from typologies (Fiss, 2011; Pappas & Woodside, 2021; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). fsQCA analyzes causal conditions and configurations using metrics such as consistency (CON) and coverage (COV) (Ragin, 2006). A CON value between 0.9 and 0.8 suggests that a condition is always necessary (Ragin, 2006), and the method allows for the study of configurational conditions for high and low organizational resilience (Zhang et al., 2022, cited in Primadasa et al., 2025).

Figura 1 Organizational Resilience and Sustainability

Fuente: Elaboración propia.

Organizational Resiliencies capabilities.

Stages of the process of (Duchek, 2020).

Anticipation; (preparation availability of resources).

Coping (acceptance, sensemaking, MCS and alternative control systems).

Adaptation/transformation (rapid recovery, reflection and learning, capacity for transformation, MCS and systems of Beliefs/limits/diagnosis).

Organizational Resilience capabilities; core RO capabilities.

Absorption capacities; (redundancy, robustness, agility).

Adaptability skills (ingenuity, adaptability, flexibility).

Other capabilities (innovation, managerial, dynamic capacity).

Management Control systems (MCS).

Role of resilience

(support the implementation of resilience measures, resilience capabilities, resilience-oriented MCS (design))

Key theoretical frameworks

Simons' LoC levers (LoC) (Belief systems, boundary systems, diagnostic control systems, interactive control systems)

Merchant control object.

MCS and performance

(Impact on organizational performance during crisis, interactive use in crisis (interactive control))

Corporate sustainability.

Definition and scope.

(triple bottom line; environmental, social, and technological economics; integration of ethical and technological aspects; objective: to maintain long-term well-being).

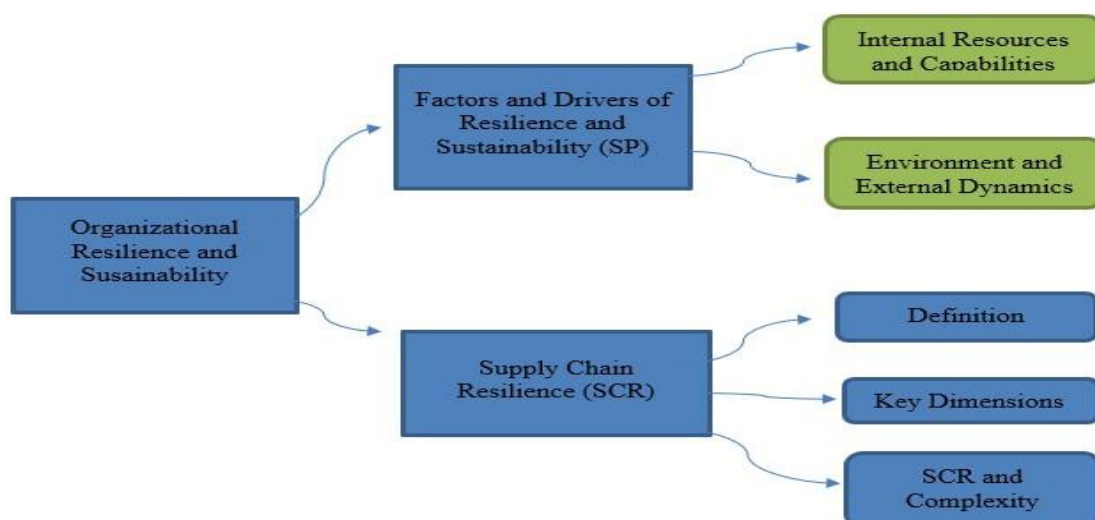
Relationship with resilience.

SC as an antecedent of RO (interdependence) SCM for resilience (adaptive capacity) DT and RO: contributes to social well-being

Sustainable performance (SP).

Multidimensional measurement (economic, social, environmental), positive influence of SCR and AC, integration strategies (green learning)

Figura 2 Organizational Resilience and Sustainability



Fuente: Elaboración propia.

Factors and drivers of resilience and sustainability (SP)

Internal resources and capacity.

Financial resources (liquidity, ROA), relational resources (relationship with stakeholders), innovation capacity (R&D), transitive memory systems (TMT, TMS), (positive impact on RO and SDP (absorptive capacity (AC); acquisition, assimilation, transformation, exploration, improvement, SCR and SP)

External environment and dynamics.

Market environment (competition (increases technological innovation (creative competition), increases pressure and costs (destructive competition), environmental uncertainty (ELU), increases the need for agility, affects legitimacy and compliance.

Supply Chain Resilience (SCR)

Definition.

Ability to prevent, absorb and recover from disruptions; adaptive capacity of the supply chain.

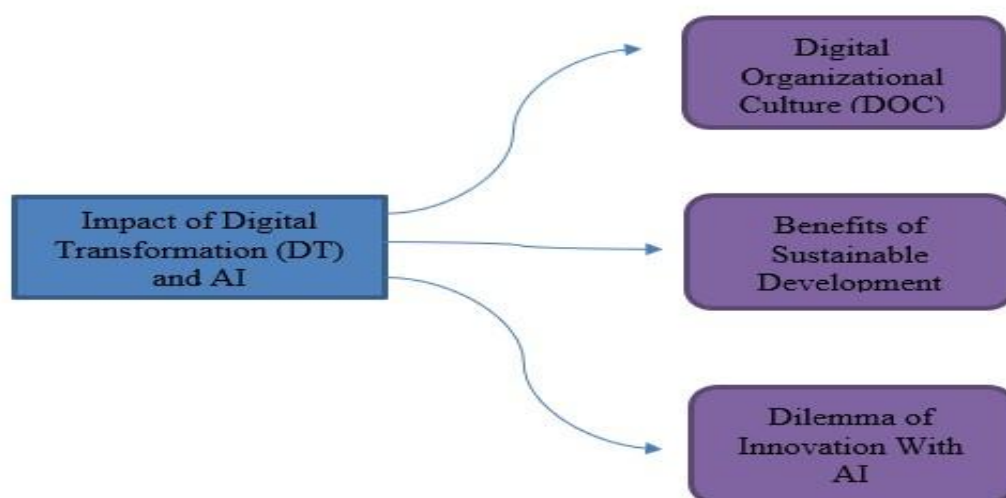
Key dimensions.

Flexibility, reserve capacity, integration (information exchange), diversification (suppliers and buyers), crisis control (advance preparation)

SCR and complexity.

Complexity increases the frequency of disruptions (weakens SCR), while complexity fosters flexibility (strengthens SCR).

Figura 3 Impact of Digital Transformation (DT) and AI



Fuente: Elaboración propia.

Impact of Digital Transformation (DT) and AI**Digital organizational culture (DOC).**

Has a positive effect on AC, SCR, and SP, fostering channel integration and efficient use of information.

Benefits of sustainable development.

Improved operational efficiency, strengthened operational response and agility, alignment with the SDGs.

AI innovation dilemma.

(creating sustainable value; reducing major challenges) (destroying sustainable value; introducing new challenges); predictable problems; design, data bias; unpredictable problems (deployment, learning curve)

Database & focus

- Sustainability (MDPI)
- Review of Managerial Science
- Business Strategy & the Environment
- Sustainability (MDPI)
- Environment, Development and Sustainability
- IJCI
- Governance & resilience
- ESG + resilience
- Technovation
- Governance & strategy

Notes / comparative insights

- Bibliometric review of resilience + sustainability: identifica cinco escuelas de pensamiento.
- Conecta sustentabilidad, resiliencia y propósito corporativo; señala la falta de tradición académica que las relacione.
- Revisión híbrida sobre cómo resiliencia y sostenibilidad interactúan a dominio organizacional.
- Revisión sistemática de 35 años de literatura; ve la resiliencia como componente de la sostenibilidad en organizaciones.
- Empírico: resiliencia organizacional (anticipación, robustez, recuperación) y efectos en sostenibilidad social y económica.

- Estudio en educación: muestra correlación significativa entre resiliencia y sostenibilidad organizacional.
- Estudia la gobernanza corporativa como factor de resiliencia organizacional. Introduce el “compliance/governance” al tema de resiliencia.
- Marco conceptual que integra ESG (Governance incluido) con resiliencia organizacional.
- Estudio empírico que investiga cómo desempeño de sostenibilidad (ESG) y resiliencia están relacionados, con moderador de “operational slack”.
- Analiza cómo mecanismos de gobernanza corporativa y decisión estratégica impulsan la resiliencia y por ende sostenibilidad.

Citation (APA)

Ciasullo, M. V., et al. (2024). Mastering the interplay of organisational resilience and sustainability: A hybrid domain-based literature review. *Business Strategy & the Environment*. (Wiley Online Library)

Flórez-Jiménez, M. P., Lleo, A., Ruiz-Palomino, P., & Muñoz-Villamizar, A. F. (2024). Corporate sustainability, organisational resilience, and corporate purpose: A review of the academic traditions connecting them. *Review of Managerial Science*, 19, 67-104. (SpringerLink)

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CONCLUSION

The literature review demonstrates that organizational resilience, corporate sustainability, and corporate purpose have evolved from independent constructs into an integrated analytical framework responding to the increasing demands of volatile, uncertain, and technologically transformed environments. The growing number of studies since 2018 confirms that disruptive phenomena—such as the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions, global supply chain disruptions, and accelerated digitalization—have acted as catalysts pushing both academia and organizations to rethink their strategic foundations.

Theoretically, organizational resilience is consolidated as a set of dynamic capabilities that enable organizations to anticipate risks, absorb impacts, and adapt or transform in the face of crises. These processes not only support survival but also strengthen corporate sustainability by fostering mechanisms of learning, innovation, and strategic flexibility. In parallel, corporate sustainability—especially from an ESG perspective—emerges both as an antecedent and a consequence of resilience, forming a virtuous cycle that reinforces long-term value creation. The introduction of corporate purpose as a third pillar (SRP) adds an identity-driven and ethical dimension that guides organizational decision-making and encourages behaviors aligned with social and environmental well-being.

From a practical standpoint, the evidence indicates that digitalization, digital organizational culture, and emerging technologies (such as AI and advanced analytics) play a decisive role in strengthening resilience capabilities at both the organizational and supply-chain levels. These tools facilitate information integration, operational agility, real-time decision-making, and adaptive capacity under uncertainty. Likewise, management control systems—particularly

those based on Simons' Levers of Control framework—enable the alignment of strategy, risk monitoring, innovation, and behavior management consistent with resilience and sustainability objectives.

Furthermore, the reviewed studies show that organizational and environmental complexity acts as a double-edged sword: it can increase vulnerability to disruptions but also foster flexibility and learning if properly managed. This underscores the importance of internal innovation policies, absorptive capacity, strong financial resources, and robust stakeholder relationships to mitigate risks and enhance sustainability.

Theoretical Implications

1. Integrated SRP conceptualization: There is a need for a unified theoretical framework that articulates resilience, sustainability, and corporate purpose as an interdependent system.
2. Dynamic capabilities as a common foundation: Resilience increasingly aligns with dynamic capabilities theory, offering a conceptual bridge between adaptation, innovation, and sustainability.
3. Digitalization as a cross-cutting dimension: The literature suggests advancing towards models that recognize digitalization as a fundamental enabler within the construct of organizational resilience.

Practical Implications

1. Resilience-based strategic management: Organizations must develop anticipation, absorption, and adaptation capabilities as integral elements of their strategy, not merely as crisis responses.
2. ESG + resilience integration: Incorporating resilience indicators into ESG frameworks allows for a more comprehensive assessment of organizational sustainability.
3. Strengthening supply-chain resilience: Diversification, digitalization, flexibility, and information integration are essential to improving resilience and ensuring operational continuity.
4. Strategic use of MCS: Management control systems should balance diagnostic and interactive mechanisms to foster learning, innovation, and control under uncertainty.

Future Research Directions

1. Development of integrated SRP models: Empirical validation of how purpose, resilience, and sustainability interact and reinforce one another.
2. Impact of AI and automation on resilience: Examination of ethical dilemmas, data biases, and technological risks affecting resilient capabilities.
3. Longitudinal studies: Research assessing the long-term impact of resilience on sustainable performance.
4. Resilience in highly complex environments: Exploration of how inflation, global disruptions, and geopolitical shifts (e.g., the potential decline of the dollar as a reference currency) influence supply-chain resilience.
5. Corporate governance, transparency, and resilience: Investigation of how governance mechanisms strengthen or weaken organizational response capabilities.

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.65011/prismaods.v4.i2.121>

Cómo citar este artículo (APA 7ª edición):

Guerrero Sánchez, P. ., Roque Nieto, N. ., & Pérez Mayo, A. R. . (2026). Organizational Resilience and Sustainability: The Role of Proactive and Reactive Capabilities in Uncertain Environments. *Prisma ODS: Revista Multidisciplinaria Sobre Desarrollo Sostenible*, 4(2), 614-633. <https://doi.org/10.65011/prismaods.v4.i2.121>