

"A man is
great by
deeds, not by
birth"
-Chanakya

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**From accumulation to activation: Why Resilience Trajectories Diverge among
Similarly Resourced Organisations in Extreme Crises**

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From accumulation to activation: Why Resilience Trajectories Diverge among Similarly Resourced Organisations in Extreme Crises

Abstract:

Organizations now operate in “permacrisis” conditions where disruptions are volatile, cascading, and boundary spanning, making resilience a strategic imperative rather than a reactive capability. This working paper explains why firms with comparable resources endowments experience sharply different crisis trajectories by advancing a Resource Activation Model grounded in Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. The model reframes resilience as a dynamic, multistage process—moving from Foundational Resource Conditions (FRC) to Shock Absorption Capacity (SAC), Adaptive Resource Activation (ARA), and ultimately Emergent Resilience Capabilities (ERC). It shows how organizations either trigger loss spirals or generate gain spirals over time, producing outcomes that range from decline and stabilization to recovery and renewal. Divergence arises less from how much resource is accumulated and more from how effectively resources are mobilized and recombined under stress—via leadership, top management experiential diversity, strategic HR systems, and slack that together enable timely buffering and adaptation. Conceptually, the paper integrates crisis management and resilience streams in a crisis-agnostic, process-centric theory of resilience; practically, it offers guidance on investing in underlying resource conditions and activation routines to break loss spirals and institutionalize capabilities that endure beyond the immediate crisis.

Keywords: organizational resilience; resource activation; COR theory; crisis management; extreme contexts; renewal trajectories.



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